

HUSKY IN CALI

DALEY LIVING (JUST)

NINJA 650

CYCLE CANADA

CANADA'S LEADING MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

KTM RC390

IT'S
THE **SIZE**
THAT **FITS**



BMW F800GS
GOOD IN THE WOODS



Éditions
Jean Robert

cyclcanadaweb.com

VOL.45 NO.08 AUGUST 2015



Sales contract no. 41147038

CAN \$4.95

**MISANO RACETRACK
& THE APRILIA RSV4:**
HOW DO I LOVE THEE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS
+ ALCOHOL IS THE PROBLEM AND THE CURE



Powered by



Developed with



Official Sponsor

Professional rider on a closed course.



The New Ducati 1299 Panigale S

Ahead of the Curve



Unprecedented technical excellence meets the pinnacle of design and performance in the new Ducati 1299 Panigale S. With its new 205 horsepower Superquadro engine, cutting-edge engine management system, Öhlins Smart EC semi-active suspension, Bosch inertial platform and new Ducati Quick Shift that allows for both clutchless upshifts and downshifts, this new Ducati Superbike is far ahead of the curve, empowering you to confidently power through it.



"Don't ride like a tourist, ride like a local" with **Destination Highways**



DH British Columbia/Map
DH Washington/Map
DH NorCal/Map
NEXT: DH SoCal/Map

GPS Apps



**BUY
ONLINE**
destinationhighways.com
DISCOUNT CODE:
CC0911

The best biking in North America is waiting to give you the ultimate riding experience. Don't miss any of it with the acclaimed guide books & maps produced by and for enthusiasts. Consider the convenience of flying and renting a bike.

Save \$\$\$ by showing your copy of DHBC or DHWA at these premier motorcycle friendly service providers and over 200 other **DH Rider Discount** businesses listed on destinationhighways.com. See website for individual terms & conditions.



KOKANEE SPRINGS GOLF RESORT

16082 Woolgar Road - Highway 3A at Crawford Bay

One of a kind 18 hole Championship Golf Course

Receive 10% off accommodations with promo code CYCLE, and a free golf club rental when arriving by motorcycle.

1-800-979-7999 www.kokaneesprings.com

SAVE 10%



Best Western Plus Revelstoke

Designated motorbike parking, in-room TV access to parking security cameras, 2 outdoor hot tubs and pool, free hot breakfast, massage therapy on-site, and cold beer & liquor store off lobby.

1925 Laforme Blvd, Revelstoke, BC
1.855.837.2043 | revelstokebestwestern.com



SAVE 10%

Regent Hotel

DOWNTOWN Revelstokes Finest Dining & Lodging



◇ Style ◇ Character ◇ Tradition ◇

112 First St. East, Revelstoke, BC • www.regenthotel.ca • 1-888-245-5523

Ride the breathtaking Selkirk & Monashee Mountains • Hot Tub, Sauna, Fitness Center & Liquor Store • Covered & Lit Bike Parking

CORP. RATE



K2 Rotor Lodge

Discover tranquil Nakusp in the beautiful Kootenays. Riders are very welcome in our 50 Room Hotel Restaurant — Lounge — Conference Room "full service hotel" and liquor store.

515 Broadway, Nakusp, BC

Reservations:

1-800-663-0100

K2rotorlodge@cmhinc.com

www.cmhk2rotorlodge.com

See video of all DHs at destinationhighways.com
Visit Destination Highways [f](#) & [@DHighways](#) [t](#) for news updates and special offers

22



64



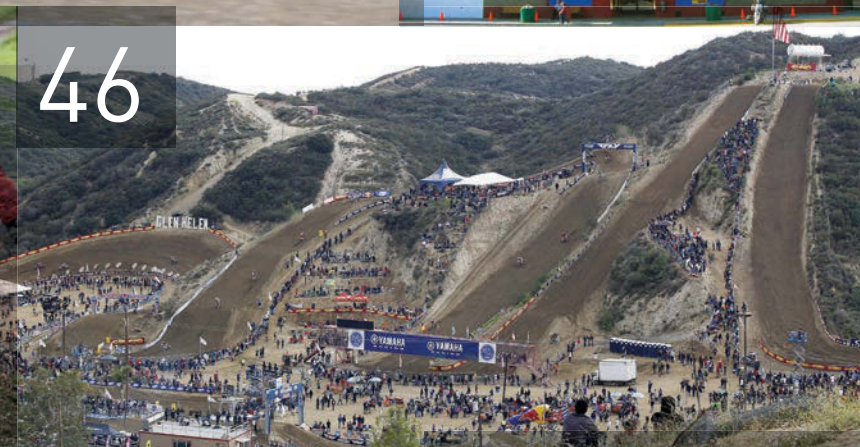
36



26



46



FEATURES

22 KTM RC390 TEST POCKET ROCKET

Little bikes have a lot going for them — agility, economy — everything except, perhaps, desirability. The RC390 changes that.

26 BMW F800GS LONG TERM TEST THE ROAD TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

James Nixon is joining Team Canada at BMW's GS Trophy competition in 2016. First he's got to earn his stripes.

36 ALCOHOL IS THE ANSWER

Ted Bishop's old Monster flatlined in a godforsaken desert town. But for the kindness of a stranger he'd still be there.

40 HUSKY 501S PRESS LAUNCH RHYMES WITH ORANGE

The resurgent brand claws its way to respectability on the shoulders of parent company KTM.

46 CALIFORNIA DREAMING GLEN HELEN AMA MOTOCROSS

If you want to understand the allure of motocross you've got to go to where the culture originated. Just mind the chili dogs.

56 APRILIA RSV4 PRESS LAUNCH AURAL FIXATION

It's not the fastest, the best looking, or the cheapest superbike. But having the most mellifluous exhaust note of any motorcycle ever made is fair compensation.

60 APRILIA TUONO PRESS LAUNCH

It's not the fastest, the best looking, or the cheapest naked bike. But having the most mellifluous exhaust note of any motorcycle ever made is fair compensation.

64 KAWASAKI NINJA 650

It's the practical and economic runabout with an unexpected backstory. (Hint: it's killing the most successful racing engine in history.)

REGULARS

08 EDITORIAL

10 READERS WRITE

12 TIMELINE

14 SPECULATOR

70 FIRST PERSON

Customer Service:

For any inquiries regarding your subscription, please contact: info@editionsjeanrobert.com
1-855-965-9494 ext. 200

President & Publisher: Montreal Office

Jean Paré — jpare@editionsjeanrobert.com

Vice-President Publishing: Montreal Office

Jean Gherlenda — jgherlenda@editionsjeanrobert.com

Editor:

Neil Graham — neilg@editionsjeanrobert.com

Assistant Editor:

James Nixon — jamesn@editionsjeanrobert.com

Copy Editor:

Steve Thornton — stevet@editionsjeanrobert.com

Graphic Designer:

Anh Dien Huynh — adh@editionsjeanrobert.com

Contributors:

Bill Petro, Paul Penzo

Sales Representative: Barrie Office (705) 728-7110

Paul Stewart — pauls@editionsjeanrobert.com

Sales Representative: Toronto Office (416) 617-6792

Tim Mank — timm@editionsjeanrobert.com

Sales Coordinator: Montreal Office (450) 965-9494 ext. 204

Alexandra Bourgault — abourgault@editionsjeanrobert.com

Distribution:

Distric Magazine Distribution Services

Return undeliverable mail in Canada to:

Subscription Services, Cycle Canada, 300, rue George-VI, Terrebonne, QC, J6Y 1N9 service@editionsjeanrobert.com
Fax: (450) 965-0990 Phone: 1-855-965-9494

Subscription Price: \$25.00 for one year (10 issues)

taxes included. Outside Canada add \$20.00 for postage.

Advertising: Rate cards are available from our offices. Other references are published in Canadian Advertising Rates & Data.

Exclusive Rights: Editorial content from Cycle Canada may not be reproduced partly or entirely without permission from the publisher.

Canada

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Printed in Canada

Legal deposit — Bibliothèque du Québec

Legal deposit — Library of Canada

ISSN 0319-2822

Sales contract no 41147038

A publication of:

Éditions Jean Robert

300, rue George-VI, Terrebonne, Québec, Canada, J6Y 1N9

Totally - Ultimate Protection Under Jeans!

AMERICA'S BEST SELLING PROTECTION SYSTEM

When you wear these under your jeans, you'll have profound, comfortable, cool protection, whatever your ride. Armor in knee/shin thigh, hips & tailbone.

Loads of amazing rider testimonials online!!



"The Bus Driver Fell Asleep...."
I was wearing Levis over my Bohn Adventure Pants, and my legs were remarkably unscathed by the accident however my buddy's knees looked as if Hannibal Lector had taken a cheese grater to them - Pizza anyone? Sorry, I couldn't resist - jeans just don't cut it when you are sliding down the pavement. Paul Lister TX
Read the full amazing story online!

Special Promo! FREE GIFT!
Just for trying them!



530-898-9269 www.CanadaPants.com
In-depth info straight to your Inbox www.CanadaPants.com/info

2015 KTM 390'S



390 DUKE \$6,175*

RC 390 \$6,675*

*HST + VEHICLE LIC. FEE EXTRA



390 DUKE

RC 390

WWW.READYKTM.COM
430 Hensall Circle
Mississauga, ON, L5A 1X7
Phone: 905-896-1600
Toll free: 1-855-896-0430



PYRENEES EXTREME

FOLLOW US
[facebook.com/edelweissbike](https://www.facebook.com/edelweissbike)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.edelweissbike.com



NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL
MOTORCYCLE SUPERSHOW



1-888-661-7469 • motorcyclesupershow.ca

JANUARY 8-10, 2016
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE • TORONTO





**YOU CAN AFFORD
THE FULL SUIT
IF YOU BUY AT
GOMOTO.CA**



60 000 ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE
ALL THE BRANDS, ALL THE GOODIES AT THE BEST PRICES
FREE SHIPPING ON ORDER OVER 99\$
* In Canada, except remote area and oversize items

GO MOTO.CA
ONLINE MOTORCYCLE SHOP

ONLINE OR BY PHONE
1-855-3GO-MOTO WWW.GOMOTO.CA

AVON
TYRES

ROADRIDER

- Covers a large range of bikes
- Large contact patch for excellent grip at all lean angles
- Comprehensive range of sizes – from modern to more traditional
- Performance upgrade for classic and vintage motorcycles



FREE
Road Hazard
Warranty



AVON
TYRES

(800) 624-7470
www.AvonMoto.com



I'm a poor judge of shoe size. I've been size 11 for 35 years and yet I can't make a purchase without eliminating size 10 as too tight and 12 as too large. Salesmen know my type. They dutifully haul out three boxes (or, if the shoes come in half-sizes, five boxes) and wait for me to try all of them on. Too tight shoes are easy to dismiss — everyone knows when their toes are pinched, but determining when large is too large is tricky.

Identifying shoes as “too large” is like calling a pillow too puffy or lasagne too cheesy. It's a matter of interpretation. Who doesn't appreciate room for the toes? But how much room is too much room? I pace back and forth in the shoe store, satisfied with the fit. But what if I need to run for a bus? Will they flop about on my feet like my father's shoes did when I clomped about the kitchen in them as a five-year-old?

Back and forth I jog in the store, attempting to replicate real-world scenarios. Quick changes in direction determine if angry dogs and nosy neighbours can be dispatched, and jackrabbit starts and abrupt stops are part of urban living. Invariably, the correct shoes are the ones *just* large enough for our feet. It's

Who can be bothered to lug out a big bike for a short ride? And yet the short rides while we're going about our day-to-day lives can bring unexpected joy

so logical it's self-evident. But why, as motorcyclists, do we wade around on motorcycles too big for the task?

My mother, who ground out the Depression on a rock-strewn farm,

bought shoes for me a size too big. I was supposed to grow into them, but sometimes I wore the shoes out before my feet ever fit them properly. Many motorcyclists apply this teenaged growth-spurt logic to the transaction of buying a bike. Just one size bigger than the size that properly fits, the argument goes, and you'll gain more than headroom for the toes, you'll gain a world of usability.

The KTM RC390 on the cover isn't a test bike. It's my partner's new motorcycle. At the end of May I doubled her an hour from home to the dealership GP


Bikes, and we rode back into the city together. It was obvious the bike fit. Her body language spoke of a rider at ease with the machine. Pulling from stoplights her feet quickly found the footpegs (inexperienced riders drag their feet from stoplights like a drunk being hauled from the saloon to the county jail) and she confidently rode at a brisk pace.

But, with a 375 cc single-cylinder engine, isn't the KTM too small for day-to-day use? Isn't it just too diminutive in a world of massive SUVs, 1,700 cc cruisers, and sky-high adventure bikes? Do you want a motorcycle that fits or are you hoping you'll grow into it?

The old photographer's chestnut goes like this: What's the perfect camera? Answer: The one you take with you. And small bikes are just easy to take with you. I can pop the KTM out of the garage (after I've received permission to borrow it, of course) and be on my way in less than a minute. It's as convenient as a bicycle, which is my preferred way of getting where I need to go within a five-kilometre radius of home. Who can be bothered to lug out a big bike for a short ride? And yet the short rides we take while we're going about our day-to-day lives can bring unexpected joy.

Yesterday I zipped through the graveyard on the way to Staples for printer ink. (With a few nice bends and a steep drop to a tight corner my local graveyard is a mini-Mosport, though I'm careful not to push too hard — there are too many gravestones and too little runoff room.) And then I remembered that I needed to fetch a visor from the magazine's lockup. Road repaving fouled my route home, but by shutting off the engine and walking the bike through a park, I was able to bypass the mess.

But what about that trip to Cape Breton or to Pennsylvania for a long weekend, you ask? Would we forestall a trip to the east coast because all we had was a Ford Fiesta and not a motorhome? We'd squeeze the kid in the back along with the suitcases and get on with it.

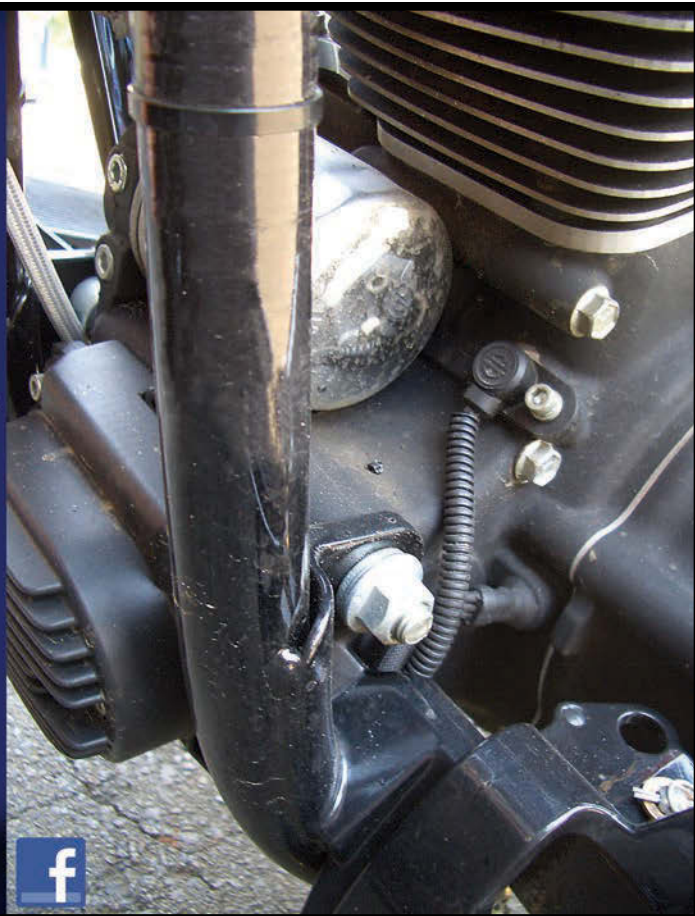
What's happened is that we've let our occasional use of a vehicle be the determinant of our purchasing decision. Most of us ride to work a few days a week, or get out a half-dozen weekends a year, or do one big trip a summer. Or every two summers. Or three. (Those of you with kids, I see you nodding.) Living with a bike that addresses the anomalies of our usage as opposed to the usual uses of the machine means that once a year we use a bike in its natural element — taking that touring bike to the coast, for instance. But the rest of the time it's overkill. But buy for the way you use a motorcycle *daily*, and every trip to the convenience store or to the next town over will put you right in your machine's sweet spot. 

Put it where the sun don't shine!

Those dark, hidden places can kill your steel. Dirt builds up and traps moisture. Next thing, corrosion starts. S100® Total Cycle Cleaner is the answer. Its creeping power can get to places you can't reach or even see. Then its penetrating action zaps even the toughest stains. (It's even got a corrosion inhibitor so it washes safely.) Ordinary washes and cleaners can't do all that! No wonder it's been the favorite of bike makers themselves for over a generation. Protect your expensive investment with the best cleaning it can get! Find it at better bike shops.



Learn more at www.s100.com.



THE **STRIKER** FROM TRAVERTSON

Available soon at **MOTO EN ACTION**



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine: all aluminium 2.0 liters, 16 valves, four cylinders in line

Horse power: 160@6500 rpm

Transmission: 6 speed automatic dual clutch with select shift or 5 speed manual-reverse

Wheels: 19 inches in the front/20 inches in the rear

Brake: 3 disc, ABS

From
\$39 995

**WHAT
ABOUT
A NEW TOY?**



WWW.MOTOENACTION.COM

1574, ST-HENRI, MASCOUCHE, QUÉBEC, J7K 2N4

450.474.1079 / 1 877 236.6686



Follow us
on Facebook

YOUR PLACE OR MINE?

It was great to see Neil Graham race his Ducati at Calabogie. He is actually much taller in person and a very handsome man.

— Wilson Bowes
Perth, Ontario

IMPOLITE. BUT WRONG?

You called Shannonville racetrack a crumbling dump in an editorial. I'll bet you got a few letters for that. Roadracing World magazine recently referred to the asphalt of a Texas racetrack as somewhere between the surface of the moon and Shannonville. So I get that it's pretty bumpy. What people don't appreciate is that if someone spent the millions to buy it, and then the next pile of millions to upgrade it, then the cost of riding it is going to go up and it's going to get crowded. Plus they just put down five new patches of asphalt. Come out to a RACE event and ride in the masters class. If the mob circles I'll do my best to save you. (Don't get me started on Grand Bend. That was a waste of gas money.)

— Chris Fehr
Napane, Ontario

A RIGHTEOUS FIRST PERSON

July's First Person was the best in a long time. Mr. Lowen did a wonderful job of getting to the matter without wasting words.

— Alan Reinhardt
Waterloo, Ontario

WE'RE TOTALLY DOWN WITH THIS

It seems that Mr. Russell was having a really bad day when he wrote you. [June Readers Write]. He claims that the motorcycle industry is building machines that are too powerful, equipping them with complex electronics to control that power, and then selling them at a price that's unaffordable.

Well, Mr. Russell, I would not want to live in your world. I'm probably older than you, and when I take my R1 down a twisty backroad, or when my wife Barb and I take our summer vacation on our Yamaha FJR1300, whether a coast-to-coast trip or a spin in the Rockies, it is a joyful experience.

In my teens, when I began riding, motorcycles were very unreliable. My 1956 BSA Gold Star, a bike I loved, shook so badly that exhaust brackets and attachments broke regularly. My AJS, Harley K, and Harley 74 weren't much better. I never travelled any distance without carrying bailing wire, drive-chain master links, or spare headlight bulbs. Today, the motorcycles I own are as reliable as the cars I own.

Long ago tank-slappers were common and tire durability and grip were atrocious. Motorcycle riding was considered high risk and injury or deaths were common. Today's motorcycles are safer to operate in all kinds of weather conditions, and the much lower motorcycle accident rate reflects this. Traction control, power drive modes, and other electronic aids will make riding even safer in future. You are mistaken, Mr. Russell, if you believe that electronic aids are useful for racers only — they benefit every rider, everywhere.

— Peter Buehl
Duncan, B.C.

IF WE MADE NICE, WE'D BE NO FUN TO HATE

You mock Mr. Russell by insulting him with the heading, but I concur completely with his long letter and would like to add that I'm tired of reading about your personal problems, the kind of bikes you don't like, and long articles about machines most of us have no connection with. A \$55,000 Kawasaki? One page will suffice. I know you can't please everybody, but could you attempt to alienate fewer?

— Mike Jackson
Merritt, B.C.

OUR WORDS ARE PURE, BUT OUR THOUGHTS ARE NOT

I could not help but notice Mr. Russell's two-column epistle. The rant covered quite a number of topics that would take some time to deconstruct, but it did make me reflect on one aspect; why I still read Cycle Canada. I am getting old, too. I don't even have a bike anymore, I sold it eight years ago after a move to the Maritimes and have not found the discretionary sum to replace it. Yet I am drawn to this magazine.

The biggest lure is the writing. Having taught English most of my life

and having witnessed the casual demise of the language, it's refreshing to see that — in this magazine anyway — good journalism continues. I have read many American and British bike magazines where this is not so (Peter Egan excepted).

Cycle Canada has been willing to publish stories where a Harley rider punches Steve Thornton or where Neil Graham doesn't get the girl in the end. And then there was the interview with the Hells Angel. What makes for a good narrative is for the writer to risk being vulnerable by telling his truth, by putting it out there for all to see. The consequence of this, of course, is that it's easy to ridicule for those who see the world differently.

I also read this magazine to see what kind of bikes are out there, bikes beyond my price range and skill level. A machine with the rudimentary technology of a Royal Enfield or a Sportster could easily accommodate my sedate riding style, though it's still interesting to see innovation, technology and aesthetics come together in a new motorcycle, even if it's a \$55,000 Kawasaki.

There are a lot of places to gather data about motorcycles in the information age, so it's important that you trust the source. For me, still, I trust the Cycle Canada crew to tell the truth.

— Basil Kazakos
New Brunswick

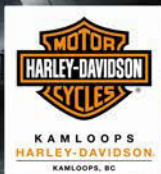
THIS MONTH'S APOLOGY

Cycle Canada magazine would like to apologize to Inside Motorcycles senior editor and Canadian road racing grandpappy Mr. Colin Fraser. On page 49 of the July issue, it was written that Mr. Fraser stayed under cover and did not venture forth in the rain. This was totally false. Mr. Fraser also helped to change tires on the motorcycles. This went totally unnoticed. Cycle Canada would like to apologize to Mr. Fraser and thank him for his contribution to the success of the event.

Send your letters by email to cyclecanada@editionsjeanrobert.com. Include your address. Name and address will be withheld upon request.

IS THE BIKE IN YOUR GARAGE REALLY
THE ONE PARKED IN YOUR HEAD?

RIDE IN FOR A TEST RIDE
& TRADE APPRAISAL TODAY!



Kamloops Harley-Davidson®
1465 Iron Mask Rd. Kamloops B.C.
1-800-665-3121 | www.KamloopsHd.com



BLUESTREAK
RACING.CA

**BEST PRICE
IN CANADA!**

Your North American
abba stand
dealer & distributor!



abba

FREE SHIPPING

In Canada
bsrtech@xplornet.com

Blue Streak Racing
Visit us at www.bluestreakracing.ca 519-475-9055

Magnum™

This big wheel
bagger has the
performance to
turn heads, along
with the style and
sound to make
people stop, stare,
and listen.



**Deerhaven Farm &
Garden Ltd.**
896 Bell Blvd. West
Belleville, ON
Tel: 613 662-5021
1 800 543-7869
www.deerhavenpolaris.com

Spoiled Sports
1898 Baseline Road West
Bowmanville, ON
Tel: 905 436-6487
www.spoiledsports.com

Wheelsport
1390 Youville Drive
Ottawa, ON
Tel: 613 841-9400
www.wheelsport.ca


Elk Island Sales
20423 Twp Road 544
Edmonton North, AB
Tel: 780 998-9159
1 888 998-9159
www.elkislandvictory.com

Peak Powersports Inc.
1174 South Service Road West
Oakville, ON
Tel: 905 681-7270
www.peakpowersports.ca

Victory and Victory Motorcycles® are registered trademarks of Polaris Industries Inc. Always wear a helmet, eye protection, and protective clothing and obey the speed limit. Never ride under the influence of drugs or alcohol. ©2015 Polaris Industries Inc.








Gravel. Dirt. Sand. Mud. Words that cause panic in the hearts, hands, and contact patches of many a seasoned street rider. But it needn't be so.

Before coming to the magazine, and aside from occasional romps on borrowed dirt bikes (everyone experiments in college), most of my motorcycling was on pavement. Most of it still is. But while at one time the sight of a singletrack snaking into the undergrowth drowned me in dread, now it suffuses me with excitement.

Discomfort and hesitation are becoming comfort and confidence. On my first-ever ride with the magazine, I, a lowly intern, was told to ride an 800 cc street-rubber-shod adventure-touring bike across a waterlogged, mud-clogged ditch that had the consistency of coleslaw. The request caused my breath to catch and butt to clench, but I dared not display fear. The initial crossing of the ditch was successful, but on the return I embarrassingly bobbled and bogged down.

Now I exploit any opportunity to get dirty, in the desire to become a cleaner, calmer rider. Repetition fosters familiarity, which turns tension about the hunt for traction into a flowing exercise of fine-tuning feel. I'm not a road racer using flat track to improve lap times; I'm a street rider exploring the vagaries of loose surfaces to improve skills. Last fall, while on a sport bike, I hit a mid-corner patch of slick mud hidden in shade. The rear slid out, but instead of freezing or ham-fisting the brake, I extended my left foot like an outrigger and surfed the bike to safety. I'm far from an expert, but I'm learning that practice-in-the-dirt brings perfect-on-the-street closer. 

— James Nixon

Honda teases Africa Twin

The bike, not the boy from Botswana



Africa Twin on the Honda stand at EICMA. Mud was rumoured to be fake.

After a 12-year absence from Honda's lineup, the Africa Twin has returned — well, it *will* return. Big Red has confirmed the new CRF1000L Africa Twin will be in dealers as a 2016 model, though as yet there's no exact delivery date.


There's also not much to go on spec-wise, aside from its engine presumably being a parallel twin of around 1,000 cc. Honda says the "True Adventure" prototype unveiled at EICMA in 2014 shows the direction of the Africa Twin's development and intent. The bike "is set to redefine expectations of just what a large-capacity adventure motorcycle can and should be capable of, both on and off-road," says Honda.

Sharp eyes at EICMA spotted that the prototype lacked a clutch lever, and Honda confirms the forthcoming Africa Twin will be available with Honda's dual clutch transmission (DCT) as an option. "This latest evolution of DCT has been specifically developed and programmed to provide the off-road ability with which the Africa Twin is synonymous," Honda says, though exactly how this version of DCT is tailored to off-road riding remains a mystery. (DCT technology hasn't been a hit in North America, but Honda points out that so far in its 2015 European sales, 53 percent of customers have chosen DCT over a manual transmission on models that offer both.)

But is it too little, too late? European brands are dominating this segment. Yes, Yamaha has the Super Ténéré, Suzuki the

V-Strom, and Kawasaki the Versys — what exactly constitutes an ADV bike is up for interpretation — but the BMW R1200GS continues to be the benchmark, followed by the KTM 1190 Adventure. And even though most owners will never attempt the off-road shenanigans depicted in marketing campaigns, the fact is simple: a bike's having legitimate off-road abilities boosts its sales.

Honda's return to the Dakar Rally in 2013 — after a 24-year absence — suggests the new Africa Twin will have decent off-road chops. Honda's Dakar success in the '80s (winners from '86-'89) was the precursor to the old Africa Twins (first the XRV650 in 1988, then the XRV750 from 1989–2003). Now that Honda Racing Corporation (HRC) is back in the Dakar, it's committed to success. "For Honda, the reason for participating in the Dakar Rally is to become the world number one," says Taichi Honda, rally technical director for Team HRC. And to doubters who say racing serves no purpose, he says this: "Dakar is the toughest off-road race in the world. We develop technologies here that can lead to mass production."

Honda has become more competitive each year since its return to the Dakar (three machines finishing in 2013, five stage wins in 2014, most stage wins and Paolo Gonçalves finishing runner-up in 2015). If history is any indication, the new Africa Twin will benefit from lessons learned in competition. In turn, so will the ADV-hungry masses — though we'll have to wait and see how many will hop over to Honda. 

Europe Yourself

You don't need to sell the farm to have a motorcycle vacation in Europe if you're willing to do the legwork

By Paul Bremner

Every year, without fail, I arrive home from the Toronto motorcycle show with a bag full of brochures for European tours. I'll spend that evening ogling photos of mountain passes in the Alps and Dolomites, trying to rationalize spending five figures on a vacation.

The truth is, unless a long-lost relative leaves me a boatload of cash, I'll need to find another way to ride in Europe. Fortunately, there are some affordable do-it-yourself options for us regular Joes — especially if you've got more time than money.

If you're planning on spending three weeks or longer in Europe, shipping your own bike across the pond is cheaper than renting once you get there. The longer you stay, the less you'll spend per day of riding. It also makes good sense if you intend to return for future trips. Motorcycle storage is readily available across Europe, and costs as little as one euro per day.

For anyone east of the Rockies, airfreight is now the simplest and most cost-effective way to ship a bike. After a long hiatus, Air Canada has jumped back into the business with a set of promotional rates that will get your bike to Europe from Toronto, Montreal, or Calgary for as little as \$700 one-way. You'll pay a variety of additional fees and taxes, including a dangerous goods charge, but it's still 30 to 50 percent cheaper than just a few years ago. And it's pretty painless: bring the bike to Air Canada Cargo the day before the flight, drain the fuel tank and disconnect the battery, then hand in your paperwork. No crating required.

Currently, Air Canada ships from Montreal or Toronto to Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Munich, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Nice, Rome, and Zurich. From Calgary you can fly to Frankfurt or London. Vancouver connects to London only.

Things get more complicated when you land. Air Canada has done a poor job of promoting the program overseas, so the sight of a motorcycle in the cargo bay may leave airline employees and customs officials scratching their heads.

Tour operator Stefan Knopf has been working with Air Canada Cargo officials at the Frankfurt airport. He offers this advice: "Ship to a busy airport where they'll have experience with motorcycle tourists," he says. "In Paris or Frankfurt, you can get your motorcycle out of the airport and on the road the same day. At a smaller airport it could take two or three days."

Knopf also cautions that many EU customs officials are unaware of regulations that allow the temporary importation of motorcycles for "touristic reasons," so they may charge you a deposit of 30 percent of the value of the bike. "It's supposed to be refunded when you exit the country, but it's actually very difficult to get that money back," he says.

Knopf has worked with authorities in Frankfurt to develop a special customs document that streamlines the process, and eliminates the need for a deposit. But again, the process only works when officials know what they're doing. "When my customers ship their bikes with Air Canada, we direct them to the main German customs office at Lufthansa Cargo. It's about a mile away from Air Canada Cargo, but we can get your papers processed and your bike out the door within a couple of hours. No deposit required. The people at the smaller customs office at Air Canada still don't get it."

If you'd rather ship sea than air, online motorcycle travel forums such as ADVrider and Horizons Unlimited can connect you with other riders looking to share a shipping container to a major European port. The initial price may be less than airfreight, but beware the hidden costs: you'll pay as much as 300 euros to have the bike off-loaded and uncrated, and you'll likely pay the 30 percent EU import deposit. There's also the issue of time. Depending on the port of departure, and the weather, a freighter will take 2-8 weeks to reach Europe.

You'll also be shipping from a U.S. port. "Shipping by sea from Canada is very complicated," says Knopf. "The ports just aren't prepared to deal with motorcycle travelers." Knopf ships containers to Germany from Orlando and either Los Angeles or Seattle at the beginning of each riding season. Many motorcycle travellers have also reported positive experiences with Schumacher Cargo Logistics, which sails out of Newark, Savannah, Houston and Los Angeles.

Because Air Canada Cargo doesn't fly from Vancouver to continental Europe, shipping by sea could be an attractive option for B.C. riders. Knopf charges \$1,325 (U.S.) to ship a motorcycle by freighter from Seattle to Germany. The price includes clearance through customs, transfer to his B&B in Heidelberg, and storage of your motorcycle until you arrive.

Buying a bike overseas is another option. It requires a bit of legwork, but it's possible. And it offers one significant advantage: you can sell the bike at the end of your trip and recover your costs.


Live the dream of riding in Europe. Just don't ride side-by-side like these buffoons, or you'll meet an early demise at the bottom of a cliff.



Martin Hurley of Ireland's Motofeirme has helped more than 200 North American riders buy and register local motorcycles for European travel. Located in picturesque Kinsale, in County Cork, Martin's shop is just a few minutes down the road from the ferry to France.

The process requires a bit of trust from both parties. Martin will work with you to select a used motorcycle on DoneDeal.ie, Ireland's answer to Kijiji. When you send the money via PayPal he'll buy the bike, transfer the title to your name, and trailer the bike to his property. The entire transaction costs a very reasonable 150 euros, plus one euro per

mile for transport. After your trip, you can store your motorcycle with Martin or he'll help you sell it to another traveller.

Although Motofeirme gets rave reviews from customers, there's one complication: you need an Irish address to insure the bike in Ireland. Motofeirme has been providing customers with a valid address, but given that a traveller from Canada can't really be a resident of Ireland, it's unclear how an insurance company would react in the case of an accident. As an alternative, Martin recommends buying a "green card" liability policy through Germany's TourInsure. This is a travel policy that covers you for everywhere in Europe except Ireland, where your bike is registered. So if you go this route, you'll need to get your bike to the ferry and make a beeline for France. 

ARRIVE ALIVE

TIPS IF YOU TAKE THE PLUNGE

Stefan Knopf has been leading tours and renting and shipping motorcycles for more than 23 years. His Heidelberg-based B&B has become a gathering place for moto-travellers from around the world. Here are his top tips for a smooth landing in Europe.

If you're going to be riding a Canadian-plated bike in Europe, you must purchase EU "green card" liability insurance before you get on the plane. This indemnifies you against any damage or injury you may cause an EU citizen. Without it, you will not get your motorcycle out of customs. You can purchase green card insurance cheaply from Greek or Bulgarian providers, but if you buy from a German insurer you'll get a more robust policy, including 2.5 million euros in liability protection, and coverage in destinations outside of the Euro zone, like Morocco and Russia.

Plan on buying roadside assistance. The German Auto Club ADAC (Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club) offers an inexpensive, comprehensive service that puts CAA to shame. If your motorcycle breaks down and cannot be repaired within three days — or, if you're sick or injured and cannot ride — ADAC will ensure you and your bike get back to your pre-determined home base in Europe. Their coverage extends throughout Europe, as well as peripheral countries such as Russia, Tunisia, Morocco and even Iceland. Fancy taking that ferry from Barcelona to Tangiers? ADAC's got you covered.

Be aware of finicky local rules. When riding in the EU, you must carry a reflective vest for each person on the bike (for roadside emergencies). You must also carry a standard European first aid kit. In France, you are technically required to carry a portable breathalyzer, although they no longer fine you for non-compliance. All of these items are readily available at gas stations.

Stefan Knopf can be reached at knopftours@aol.com and Motofeirme's Martin Hurley at sfadvmoto@gmail.com.



Island BMW

Victoria, BC
Tel: (250) 474-2088

Vancouver Motorrad

Vancouver, BC
Tel: (604) 731-5505

Pacific Motorrad

Richmond, BC
Tel: (604) 276-2552

Bentley Motorrad

Kelowna, BC
Tel: (778) 755-5540

Argyll Motorrad

Edmonton, AB
Tel: (780) 435-6811

Blackfoot Motorrad

Calgary, AB
Tel: (403) 243-2636

European Motorrad

Saskatoon, SK
Tel: (306) 934-3717

Wildwood Sports

Winnipeg, MB
Tel: (204) 477-1701

Budds' BMW

Oakville, ON
Tel: (905) 845-3577

BMW Toronto

Toronto, ON
Tel: (416) 623-4269

Maranello Motorrad (Now Open)

Toronto, ON
Tel: (416) 238-7898

Endras Motorrad

Ajax, ON
Tel: (905) 619-5522

Wolf BMW

London, ON
Tel: (519) 951-9482

Ottawa Motorrad

Ottawa, ON
Tel: (613) 731-9071

Monette Sports

Laval, QC
Tel: (450) 668-6466

Moto Internationale

Montréal, QC
Tel: (514) 483-6686

Moto Vanier

Québec, QC
Tel: (418) 527-6907

Carrier BMW (Now Open)

Drummondville, QC
Tel: (819) 395-2464

Evasion BMW

Sherbrooke, QC
Tel: (819) 821-3595

Atlantic Motoplex

Dieppe, NB
Tel: (506) 383-1022

Avalon Motorrad

St John's, NL
Tel: (709) 726-6500



**ELBOW OUT.
KNEE DOWN
AND GO.**

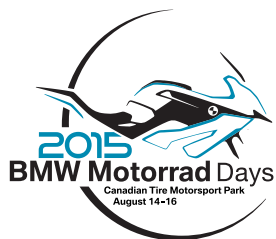
MAKE LIFE A RIDE.

BMW Motorrad
Canada

bmw-motorrad.ca



The Ultimate
Riding Experience®



**WIN A SUMMER
ON THE
51000
XR**

Buy your tickets before July
31, 2015 and you will be
automatically entered for your
chance to win!



BMW MOTORRAD DAYS: IT'S THE BMW EVENT OF THE SUMMER

Once again motorcycling enthusiasts from all over will gather at BMW Motorrad Days, from August 14-16th, 2015 at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park™. There's always a fantastic atmosphere – with lots of new things to see plus getting together with old friends – there's always lots to talk about.

So mark your calendars and don't miss the BMW event of the summer!

Visit www.bmw-motorrad.ca for tickets and more information.

*You must be 19 years of age and possess a valid motorcycle license to be eligible to enter this contest. Complete contest details at bmw-motorrad.ca or your local Retailer.

© 2015 BMW Motorrad Canada. "BMW", the "BMW Logo", "The Ultimate Riding Experience", all BMW model designations and all other related marks, images and symbols are the exclusive properties and/or trademarks of BMW AG, used under licence.

All washed up


Ducati Diavel taking to the waves
or a burial at sea?



When personal watercraft slept with hallowed European brand the result was unconscionable.

Witness the Wetcati, a wretchedly named personal watercraft concept by Swedish design firm Zolland Design AB. The company was founded by Bo Zolland in 2002 and produces 3D renderings, primarily of boats and cars, and specializes in retro designs (a few ... how to put this ... *interesting* takes on the BMW R nineT can be seen at www.zollanddesign.se). Here they've defiled Ducati's don't-call-me-a-cruiser Diavel — something hardcore Ducatisti won't be upset about. But even dyed-in-the-wool Ducati sportbike fanatics will feel nauseated after seeing the brand sullied so.

The sloping lines, from tank to seat to tail section, are undeniably Diavel, so too the faux trellis frame and air scoops flanking an ellipsoid headlight unit. And what powers the beast? Two — yes, *two* — 1,098 cc Testastretta V-twins. Hypothetically (if Ducati's claims can be believed) that's 324 horsepower — enough to easily outrun Ogoogo. The inclusion of number plates suggests would-be owners will be racing their Wetcaties. (Last to the yacht club buys the caviar!)

That the Wetcati exists — even as a rendering — is cringe-worthy. Thankfully, according to Ducati's Nathon Verdugo, we needn't fear it will take physical form (at least with official backing). "Anyone with a computer can produce renderings," he says. "The Wetcati has no connection with Ducati whatsoever." 

Oh my Bosch!

James Nixon samples safety tech
at Bosch testing facility



Horrible weather meant fake rain was unnecessary at Bosch's Michigan testing grounds.

"Don't put your feet down," a Bosch test rider warns me. "If you get tangled with the outriggers you could break something." I assume he's referring to my bones, not the sturdy steel structures bolted like training wheels to either side of the Ducati Multistrada. I'm to test ABS by barreling towards a strip of slick basalt tile — which has roughly the same grip characteristics as snow-packed pavement — and then hammering the brakes. Sounds easy, though first I have to get the bike off this glorified sidestand without using my feet.

Four stations are set up at the Bosch proving grounds in Flat Rock, Michigan, to test various safety features (wheelie and stoppie control, stability control — aka cornering ABS — and traction control) of the latest Multistrada, though it could just as easily be the Panigale 1299. Or the KTM 1190 Adventure. Or BMW K1600GTL. Or any number of models from a variety of makes. Numerous manufacturers use Bosch systems tailored to OEM requirements.

Bosch began as the whimsically named Workshop for Precision Mechanics and Electrical Engineering, founded in Stuttgart, Germany, by Robert Bosch in 1886. In 1995 the company introduced its first motorcycle-specific ABS, a chunky unit that weighed 4.5 kg. Now they're the size of handheld cameras. The ABS 9.1ME unit on the Multistrada is 1.6 kg.

Features like wheelie control (regulating engine torque to mitigate front wheel lift during acceleration), stoppie control (bleeding front brake pressure to keep the rear wheel on the ground during braking), traction control (modulating power delivery to facilitate traction while accelerating), and linked brakes (applying the appropriate amount of rear brake pressure when

only the front brake is engaged, or vice versa) are commonplace. However, the difference between ABS (modulating brake pressure to prevent wheel lock-up) and cornering ABS (doing the same while scraping a footpeg) is murky. Since regular ABS is comparing front and rear wheel speeds, shouldn't it accomplish the same thing as cornering ABS, regardless of lean angle? I ask the technical wizards assembled in a Bosch boardroom to explain standard vs. cornering ABS in laymen's terms. They do their best.

"Within a bike's contact patch there's a total amount of force the tire can handle, which changes based on the conditions," say Bosch. "If you're going through a turn, all that force is available for turning. If you're braking while straight up and down, all that force is available for braking. But if you're braking *and* turning, now you're dividing the forces. If you enter a turn and grab a handful of front brake — with standard ABS — you may exceed the force available for the contact patch in those conditions, resulting in a crash. The standard ABS algorithm cannot guarantee cornering stability. Cornering ABS takes into account degree of lean, speed, pitch, and manages the amount of brake force applied so the total force approaches but doesn't exceed what the tires can handle." (For example, at a 33-degree lean angle on dry pavement, only 85 percent of the total brake force can be applied. The slipperier the surface, the less force can be applied at the same angle.)

Basically, the more information available to the system, the more quickly and intelligently it can function. Bosch's MM5.10 sensor makes it all possible by monitoring acceleration, deceleration, roll, yaw, and pitch, updating every hundredth of a second. Not only does this open the door for lean-angle dependent ABS and combined braking, but also lean-angle dependent traction control, as well as optimizing the effectiveness of wheelie and stoppie control.

After watching Bosch test-rider demos, we're let loose to sample the systems ourselves — well, not quite. This is Bosch, a company preoccupied with safety, and with six journalists and only four bikes, there's a strict schedule to follow. That means I sit for half an hour before being ferried to the skid pad. Normally sprinklers are used to wet the surface, but they're not needed today; it's pissing down rain.

The first pass is panic braking with ABS off, which immediately cocks the front wheel and brings the Multi skidding to a halt on the outrigger's slider. After exiting the pad and doing an about face (a deliberate action with outriggers attached), I complete the second pass — threshold braking — with ABS still off. The bike eventually comes to a stop, though keeping it upright is difficult and stopping distance is considerable. The same manoeuvres are then completed with ABS on and chattering away like two squirrels tussling on a tin roof. The Multistrada is much easier to handle and stopping distance improves considerably. But you already knew that would happen.


Next it's wheelie and stoppie control, where, having acclimatized to outriggers, I must remind myself to put a foot down at stops. Bosch — unsurprisingly — forbids us from disabling the systems, though during the demo a test rider proved that the Multistrada willingly hoists the front and rear wheels when unhindered. In Touring mode, with wheelie control at the most intrusive level eight, I dump the clutch, give it full throttle, and the result is ... nothing. While the Multistrada springs forth at a very fast rate, it feels smooth and incredibly controlled — exactly as it should. Dialing wheelie control back to level two, the difference is

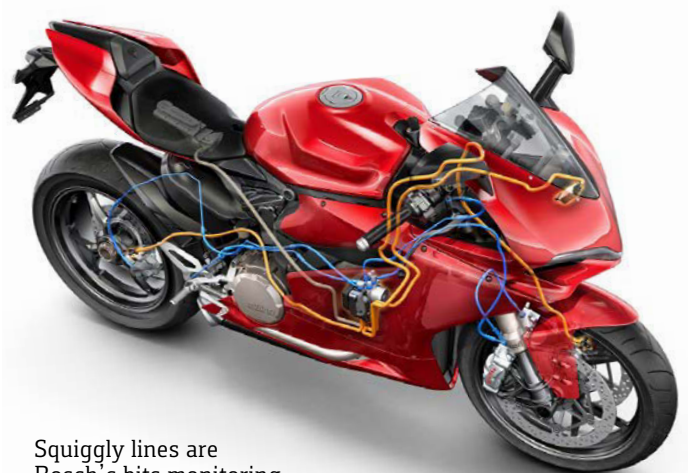
immediate. Under hard acceleration the front wheel lightens and lifts off the ground — though not much — and is set back down as softly as a Victorian governess placing a cup in a saucer, all with the bike charging headlong toward the horizon. Stoppie control is similarly predictable, keeping the rear wheel planted on the pavement during hard stops.

Next is cornering ABS, the system I'm most excited to test — but first a break. As I twiddle my thumbs in the hospitality area, the walkie-talkies of our Bosch handlers crackle. "Ambulance needed at the gravel strip." A journalist has crashed during his traction control runs and the program is cut short.

It's one thing to read about what cornering ABS does, another to watch a video, but it's truly astounding to see how the bike keeps its line and the front doesn't tuck when the front brake is spiked mid corner. The next step, of course, is personal experience. I'm extremely disappointed I don't get to test the system today, but heartened at having seen it demonstrated in front of me. Though it goes against an experienced motorcyclist's instincts, I now have the chutzpah to try it on my own this summer.

As cruel as it sounds, the journalist's crash is helpful in highlighting the most common cause of crashes: the rider. (He's OK, by the way, and escapes with a broken collarbone.) Old-schoolers might be suspicious of a system malfunction, but in this instance the rider admits it was his fault. "I was testing traction control while coming out of a gravel corner," he says, "and didn't get on the gas soon enough to pick the bike up and the front washed out. It was 100 percent my fault." He isn't on the throttle or brakes when he goes down; there's no way for the system to intervene. The Bosch system doesn't make the bike impossible to crash, it simply mitigates the risks as much as possible. ABS can help you stop, but it can't stop you from riding into a brick wall if you don't hit the brakes.


While critics of such technology claim it's removing the humanity from motorcycling, Bosch insists its systems are meant to enhance your riding experience, not hinder it; it's a safety net to catch you in an emergency — when you death-grip the brake lever mid-corner after a kid stumbles into the street — and not a crutch to hold you back. ABS has helped me avoid serious injury — maybe death — more than once. With such high stakes, once is more than enough. I'm firmly in Mr. Bosch's corner. 



Squiggly lines are Bosch's bits monitoring a Panigale's progress.

Fun Fact!

In Wetcati-related news...

Ducati claims the 2015 Multistrada's left switchblock is waterproof to a depth of one metre (submerge and confirm, new owners, we're waiting to hear from you). When asked when the company will begin waterproofing bikes in their entirety, Ducati North America's Nathon Verdugo said, with a smile, "Have you heard of the Wetcati?" 



In the bag

Canadian Rider Safety Fund expanding bottle bag initiative


No, those aren't colossal trick-or-treating sacks. They're bottle bags at Ontario's Shannonville Motorsport Park, and if the efforts of the Canadian Rider Safety Fund (CRSF) are successful, their use will be widespread in coming seasons.

The CRSF is, according to its Facebook page, "a non profit organization dedicated to providing soft barriers for increased racetrack safety." When thinking of soft barriers at a racetrack you'd typically picture hay bales, foam blocks, or, the most effective, inflatable air fences. However, the latter are prohibitively expensive to purchase and maintain (a source estimated the cost of replacing a worn-out section of air fence at \$6,000).

Bottle bags offer a more affordable and easily maintainable alternative. They're large rectangular fabric containers filled with empty plastic bottles with the lids attached. "These recyclable products serve as deformable structures to absorb impact and cover off solid objects such as walls and guardrails," a press release states. (But please, don't remove the lids and swill the remains of the windshield washer antifreeze.)

After successful pilot programs at Shannonville and Nova Scotia's Atlantic Motorsport Park, the CRSF is looking to expand the bottle bag initiative to other motorcycle road racing venues across the country. "The goal with the program is to provide relatively affordable, renewable protection device installations at all Canadian tracks," the press release states.

It's an ingenious program, repurposing discarded plastics and improving safety simultaneously. But as a non-profit, the CRSF relies on sponsors and donations to operate and expand. This year's focus is on raising funds to purchase and transport the bags, but donations can also be made in the form of empty plastic bottles with lids (check the CRSF Facebook page for more information on how to donate).

"When the program is fully realized, protection devices would remain at each venue, and not require transport from location-to-location, as it is today with air fences. In this way, they can serve race events as well as testing and track days." That's peace of mind we can all appreciate: one person's trash can keep others out of traction. 

Kenny Reidmann tiptoes past crash bags at Shannonville. Barriers-from-recycling is an ingenious idea.





FURY

CUSTOM-STYLED CONFIDENCE

STRETCHING NEARLY SIX FEET FROM AXLE TO AXLE, THE FURY IS AN OUTRAGEOUS TESTIMONY TO THE BUILDER'S ART.

STURGESS CYCLE

615 KING STREET WEST
HAMILTON, ON
TEL.: 905 522-0503
WWW.STURGESSONLINE.COM

PRO CYCLE

550 WINDMILL ROAD
DARTMOUTH, NS
TEL.: 902 468-2518
WWW.PROCYCLEONLINE.COM

READY HONDA POWERSPORTS

4430 HENSALL CIRCLE
MISSISSAUGA, ON
TEL.: 905 896-1600
855 896-0430
WWW.READYHONDAPOWERSPORTS.COM

KW HONDA

465 CONESTOGO ROAD
WATERLOO, ON
TEL.: 519 746-7900
WWW.KWHONDA.COM

ADVENTURE HONDA

630 46 AVE N.E. UNIT #117
CALGARY, AB
TEL.: 403 277-0099
WWW.ADVENTUREHONDA.CA

ORILLIA MOTORSPORTS

111 COMMERCE ROAD
ORILLIA, ON
TEL.: 705 325-6311
WWW.ORILLIAMOTORSPORTS.COM

CAMERON CYCLE

2232 DAVIS ROAD
PETERBOROUGH, ON
TEL.: 1 705 876-1171
WWW.CAMERON-CYCLE.COM

BURLINGTON CYCLE

2201 PLAINS ROAD EAST
BURLINGTON, ON
TEL.: 905 637-6208
WWW.BURLINGTON-CYCLE.COM

LARRY'S SMALL ENGINE

286270 COUNTY ROAD 10
MONO, ON
TEL.: 519 941-1517
WWW.LARRYSSMALLENGINES.CA

GAUDIN'S HONDA

1004 1ST AVE
BEAVERLODGE, AB
TEL.: 780 354-8132
877 982-7826
WWW.GAUDINSHONDA.COM



OF THE HIGH END LOW END

Everyone wants to know. Is it worthy of the hype?





Photographs by Bill Petro

CYCLE CANADA TEST

KTM RC390



Light, narrow,
and 91 miles
to the pre-
Trudeau gallon.
Brilliant.

After a four-day weekend of practising and racing on the sinuous (a shop-worn word, but its use is apt) pavement of eastern Ontario's Calabogie racetrack, hopping off a Ducati 888 superbike and onto a KTM RC390 for the ride back to Toronto could only be disappointing. After swapping leathers for a textile riding suit, Neil Graham set out just as the temperatures dropped and the rains arrived. He had a long, long night ahead of him.

The wives and girlfriends of motorcycle racers (from pros down to club racers like Graham) give up an immense amount of time to support partners. Weeds grow high in gardens and domestic chores go undone in favour of falling asleep in the paddock of a racetrack to the drone of grinding generators and the midnight howls of a freshly rebuilt engine. Graham knew that the right thing to do was to offer to ride his partner's new RC390 back to Toronto so she could ride it on some of the province's best roads on the way to Calabogie. Except that now it's raining. And he's tired from a weekend of racing. Poor lad.

Setting the mechanical bits aside for a moment, it's fair to say that the RC390 is the only little bike you'd buy on looks alone. With the orange trellis frame and wheels and its aggressive lines, it looks like a mini Ducati or MV Agusta — Euro light, if you like. Parked in the pits at Calabogie, it gathered at least as much attention as Graham's old Ducati and even older VW bus. But can the hype around this bike be substantiated?

Graham, as is often the case, became grumpy for no good reason. On the way down to Kingston he appreciated the massive increase in legroom over the miserably uncomfortable Ducati race bike, and the decrease in horsepower from the racebike's 90-something down to the KTM's dyno-verified 30-something (we've heard numbers as high as 40 horsepower, but better to err on the side of moderation) wasn't the letdown he expected.

A quick two-three upshift saw the KTM sprint to 80 km/h, and then, with two more gears dispatched, a further jolt to 140 km/h. The RC390 isn't just cute, it's quick. With the roads properly slick, Graham left the bike in sixth gear for Perth Road 10 from Westport down to highway 401, and it maintained a steady 100 km/h up hills without the necessity of downshifting. Were the KTM a big bike, we'd never mention the necessity of downshifting, but motorcycles in this category exist on a fine line: a few horsepower too little and the rider has to wring the neck of the machine to keep up with traffic, which, aside from feeling cruel, can lead to a feeling of vulnerability. With texting SUV drivers drunk on rampant fuel consumption plying the roads, you don't want to be caught out when they gain on you from the rear.

Here's the skinny: the KTM RC390 will cruise with traffic at 130 km/h. And it'll pass most traffic, too. And, if you like, and if you're confident in your ability to spot the cops, it'll maintain 150 km/h for as long as you like. The bugaboo of singles is vibration, but the KTM is smooth, particularly so at 120–130 km/h in sixth gear. Over time vibration can be felt through the handgrips, which can make fingers go slightly numb. It helps to ensure that a light grip is maintained, but part of the problem is the cheapness of the grips themselves, which have the pliability of hard candy. Replacing them with a \$20 pair of aftermarket grips would pay instant dividends.

The cheapness of the handgrips reminds you that the RC390 is a bike that's built to a price. So, too, the dash reminds you that this isn't an \$18,000 motorcycle — bisecting the dash is an unsightly mould line that splits the top from the bottom; a surprising oversight (and one that's been retouched out of official factory photographs) for so thoughtfully designed a motorcycle. The digital readout on the

dash is usefully designed, and the illumination automatically adjusts for ambient lighting conditions. Speed is prominently displayed, as is a useful gear indicator, and, best of all, a proper fuel gauge. There is also a tachometer that runs across the top of the gauge, but it's so small that it's incomprehensible without resorting to a magnifying glass for assistance.


One of the most thoughtful—perhaps unprecedented—features is the backlit illumination of the switchblocks, as in the style of a car's dashboard. We put our heads together and even with two candlepower's worth of intelligence couldn't think of another motorcycle that does this. (Please write if you can think of another.) We could imagine this a boon to the fat of thumb and beginners who habitually stab at the horn instead of the turn signal switch.

The 375 cc twin-cam four-valve single powering the RC390 is impressive for its power and compactness—the bike is so thin through the midsection that it's positively anorexic. Less impressive is the engine's sound, which is reminiscent of what you hear from the basement in spring when the sump pump kicks in. (At the risk of offending the centrestand brigade, how did single-cylinder motorcycles ever gain a fanatical following for their sound? A Manx Norton sounds like a well driller pounding through the sediment.)

Narrow motorcycles like the RC390 solve certain problems while initiating *other* problems. As much as a thin midriff aids the feet of the short of inseam to reach the ground (and allows footpegs to be lower to the ground as they're not as widely splayed) it means that seats are narrower, too. And KTM has not always had a stellar reputation for seats that are kind to the behind. The RC390's seat is thin and hard, which would be a far greater problem were the bike's seating position not so comfortable. Cruiser riders won't ever believe us, but there is a reason that equestrians eschew highway pegs on their steeds—you really need the feet below the hips to control the beast, be it powered by hay or by gas. And, in a surprise to all, we even did a stint two-up that resulted in a reasonably comfortable journey for all. It's no touring bike, but the passenger noted that the RC390 was considerably more comfortable than, for instance, Aprilia's Tuono.

Aside from the engine's utilitarian sound, the RC390 has a surprising degree of mechanical sophistication. The gearshift is light and precise and clutch engagement linear and smooth. As it is with most small bikes, first gear is exceptionally low, which helps beginners get a move on with a minimum of anxiety. The RC390 is ABS equipped, but attempts to prove its worth in the dry came up short as the single rotor system doesn't have enough stopping power to lock the front wheel. But in the wet it was a different matter, and a firm squeeze brought the RC390 to a smooth stop with only minimal pulsing at the lever.

It's impossible to discuss inexpensive motorcycles without a discussion of price, and the RC390, at \$6,599, sits at the high end of low end. Yamaha's 320 cc parallel-twin R3 is only \$4,999, but, inexplicably, is without antilock brakes, even as an option. Kawasaki's Ninja 300 with ABS is \$5,799, but Kawasaki's website shows that until the end of August the price is cut to \$5,149—a substantial \$1,450 less than the RC390.

KTM, with the RC390, has created the season's most talked-about machine. Even riders who long ago bade small capacity motorcycles farewell see in it something special. But it's not just the RC390 that's noteworthy. It's the golden age of little motorcycles, a statement we couldn't have imagined saying just a decade ago. 



It's not perfect, but the RC390 is a standout machine. KTM has an accessory saddle that's supposedly more comfortable. Why not just fit that from the get-go?

SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL	KTM RC390
PRICE	\$6,599
ENGINE	Liquid-cooled four-valve single
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	44 hp @ 9,500 rpm
TORQUE (CLAIMED)	26 lb-ft @ 7,250 rpm
DISPLACEMENT	375 cc
BORE AND STROKE	60 x 89 mm
COMPRESSION RATIO	12.9:1
FUEL DELIVERY	Fuel injection
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed
SUSPENSION	43 mm inverted telescopic fork; single shock with adjustable spring preload
WHEELBASE	1,340 mm
RAKE/TRAIL	23.5°/99 mm
BRAKES	Single front 300 mm rotor with four-piston caliper; rear 230 mm rotor with single-piston caliper; ABS
TIRES	110/70-17 front; 150/60-17 rear
DRY WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	152.5 kg
SEAT HEIGHT	820 mm
FUEL CAPACITY	10 L
FUEL CONSUMPTION	3.1 L/100 km
FUEL RANGE	322 km


THE DEEP END

BMW GS Challenge
pushes riders to their
limits. And then some

By James Nixon
Photographs by Bill Petro







Nixon is all giggles in the beginning, but after a day of crashing and crawling through the mud, he realized he has much to learn before 2016.

“Pretend that blue plastic barrel is a bear,” says Clinton Smout, certified BMW GS off-road instructor and organizer of the Ontario GS Challenge held at Horseshoe Resort, just north of Barrie. He does his best bear impersonation, complete with growls and flourished forepaws, but coming from the affable, always-smiling Smout it’s more comical than intimidating. The barrel is 15 feet beyond a pylon, which sits at the centre of a ribboned-off half-circle. We’re to complete an emergency U-turn around the pylon, with trials-style demerit points added for putting a foot or feet down, falling, hitting the pylon, backing up, or breaking the ribbon. Oh, and there’s a giant puddle to cross first. Fastest back to the start wins.

It’s the second day of the Challenge and this is the first of four scored events. I’m excited, which makes me overzealous. At the signal I charge through the puddle and reach the turn at a higher speed than I’d intended. I pitch the handlebar to the left and stomp on the rear brake to bring the back end around, but I’ve leaned the bike over too far too fast. As the front tire is sucked into the rut that previous competitors have started, it begins to slide out. I get flustered and forgo putting a foot down (I should’ve, and stomached the demerit point) and try to save it with a squirt of throttle, but it’s too late and I hit the dirt. A fall guarantees the maximum five demerits; this event is a write-off. I consider the other 50 competitors and wonder if I even belong here.

The secret’s out; I’m a street rider. Since joining the magazine I’ve started gaining off-road experience, but it pales in comparison to

those who grew up on dirt bikes or have been adventuring for years. With plans to accompany the Canadian team to next year’s GS Trophy in Southeast Asia, I need to bring my skills up to snuff—hence our long-term test BMW F800GS. We had stock street rubber replaced with off-road oriented Continental TKC80 tires, and swapped the standard skid plate for a sturdy steel unit. As a warm-up for the Challenge (and first off-road ride on this GS) I complete a SMART Adventure Programs off-road training day, which is also run by Smout at his Horseshoe Resort facility. I also take part in the Challenge’s optional Friday training day—essentially identical to the SMART program, but made more difficult by the day’s heavy rain and slippery conditions.

I’m far from alone on Friday; about half of the Challenge participants attend the training day. Some are vets getting a refresher. Some have never ridden off-road. Just as the skill sets vary, so too does the equipment (this is a run-what-you-brung event): there are GSs of different model years and displacements (650, 700, 800, 1100, 1200), some air-cooled, some liquid-cooled, some Adventure variants. There are even non-GS models in the mix (a KLR650, and V-Strom 1000 with street tires). They can participate but not win—with one exception. A crafty competitor found a loophole in the rules, which state that you must ride a BMW to advance. A week before the event he purchased BMW’s short-lived G450X enduro; compared to an R1200GS, it’s a trials bike. (If you must resort to this sort of tactic, perhaps you shouldn’t be representing Canada at the GS Trophy.) Friday is filled with slow-speed manoeuvres, stopping drills, ascents and descents, hook slides, and light trail riding. Most attendees have no illusions about winning and are just here to participate, try something new and be challenged.

On Saturday the numbers swell and a hint of friendly competition creeps into the event. Tire pressures are dropped for improved traction in the dirt (I’d already lowered mine to 25 psi the day before), and some participants remove mirrors and windscreens. While half head out for a dual sport ride, the other half complete the scored events. I switch from Road to Enduro mode, stiffen the suspension by selecting the Sport ESA setting (ESA is an ex-works accessory on our F800GS), and disable ABS and traction control. And then I botch the bear turn.

I’m redeemed with a decent run in the braking box. From a standing start we race headlong (one at a time, to avoid a pileup) towards a patch of AstroTurf pegged to the ground. We must come to a stop with the front tire on the patch. Penalty points are added for falls. Each rider gets two attempts. Fastest time wins. Those foolish enough to wait directly behind the starting line are doused with roost. I bring the bike to a stop squarely on the patch by feathering the front brake while the locked rear wheel acts as an anchor. Perhaps I’m not out of my depth after all.

For the next event riders must leave the starting line, travel 30 feet, and pick up an underinflated soccer ball from a table to the right of their bike. They then turn right around a barrel, continue up and over a dirt mound, turn right around another barrel, and replace the ball on the table. Sounds easy, except by the time you reach the first barrel the ball must be held aloft in your left hand (no clutch), and touching the ground, as well as stalling the bike or dropping the ball, results in disqualification. In this case, *slowest* time wins.

With its off-road slant, you’d typically think a smaller, lighter bike (an F800GS—or that G450X) would have an advantage at the GS Challenge, but this isn’t always so. In this case, an R1200GS’s heavier flywheel makes it harder to stall, and its lower gearing keeps it chugging along as slowly as a draft horse. While others make their attempts I try some one-handed circles. The F800GS sputters and feels finicky at the slowest crawl I can manage. On my attempt I engage the

Changing a tire is hard. Doing so with people watching and a stopwatch timing is torturous.



Riders queue for the hill climb and descent drill. Control is the key, not speed.





clutch and pick up the ball with my right hand as I coast slowly past the table. I set the ball in my lap and settle the throttle, then reach for the ball with my left hand but bobble it. While struggling to get control, I stall the bike. I'm disqualified and hugely disappointed. Only a handful of participants are able to complete this challenge, a cheer of praise arising from onlookers when they do.

Saturday's final scored event seems simple: fastest lap around a modest motocross track—but there's a catch. A demerit point is doled out whenever a wheel leaves the ground, making control as important as speed. We're allowed to walk the track once, and get one attempt. I feel like I have a solid run (times aren't announced) and keep the wheels firmly planted, though there are definitely some areas where I could go faster. Fellow competitors applaud each participant, then, over lunch, swap tales about where each felt they faltered. It's more bravo than bravado, encouragement than criticism.

After lunch the two groups swap and we depart for the dual sport ride covering about 90 km in Simcoe County, including some rural back roads, but mostly trails. Initially we're in groups of five or more, though preferences in pace soon separate the herd. Tim Burke, a 35-year-old engineer from Newcastle, Ontario, is the most skilled in our group and becomes the de facto leader. I chase his 2010 R1200GS down sandy trails and follow his lines through whooped-out sections and greasy, super slick areas (yesterday's rain has left low-lying spots partially submerged). That he's at home off-road is clear, his pace impressive considering his bike is shod with less aggressively treaded Continental TKC70s.

More difficult, optional trails are marked with yellow signs. "If you want to represent Canada, you should be able to do the yellow routes," Smout says. I take this to heart; even though I'm just an accompanying journalist, I'll still be representing my country at the Trophy. I'm being given what others are *earning*; I'll try to earn their respect by involving myself in the process as much as possible, and not be a hack who simply shows up. When Tim takes the yellow fork, I follow.

There's a rocky ascent, the F800GS's 21-inch front tire tracking well through the chop, then a long, incredibly narrow single track snaking through the trees like an anaconda in the Amazon. It's a slog, though the bike's wide bars provide good steering leverage, and while I stall once or twice and strip the bark from some trees, I escape unscathed. Later, we encounter a rider stranded in a morass the consistency of soggy cornflakes. Tim dismounts and helps free him from the deep ooze. Meanwhile, members of our original group have caught up, one promptly bogging down on the edge of a giant mud puddle. After he's extricated, we continue and complete the route in a shade over two hours. There were some trials on the trails, but we finish with a sense of having *achieved* something.

During Saturday night's BBQ the scores are tallied. For most, a memorable GS Challenge is over. The top 10, however, compete tomorrow for three spots at the GS Trophy qualifier. Finishing first is the (ahem) *gentleman* on the G450X. Tim, who narrowly missed making the Trophy two years ago, sneaks in at the tenth spot. I finish mid-pack, but will continue participating. (Journalists are often pampered. Sometimes, they're punished.)

Sunday's mood, while still good-natured, is decidedly more serious; the top 10 are smiling, but those smirks are tinged with intent. Tim has sourced a single TKC80 rear tire. "It's better than nothing," he says, completing the swap just before the program begins. Smout designed and constructed Sunday's challenges, which are much more difficult than Saturday's, with the help of his SMART crew and former GS Trophy participant Patrice Glaude, who's also an off-road instructor and skilled trials rider.

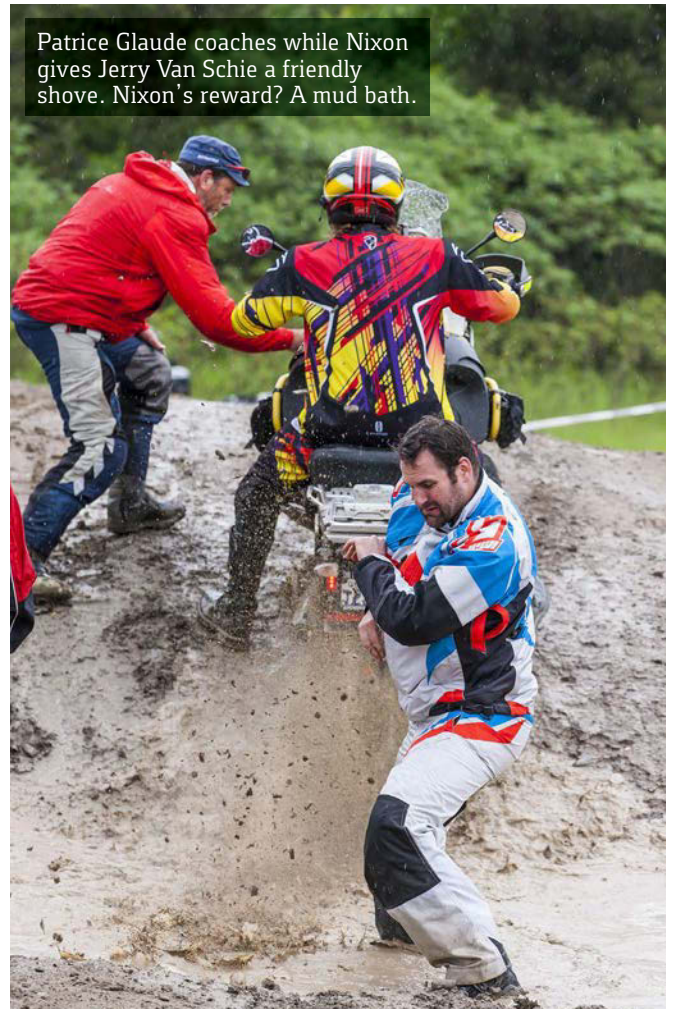


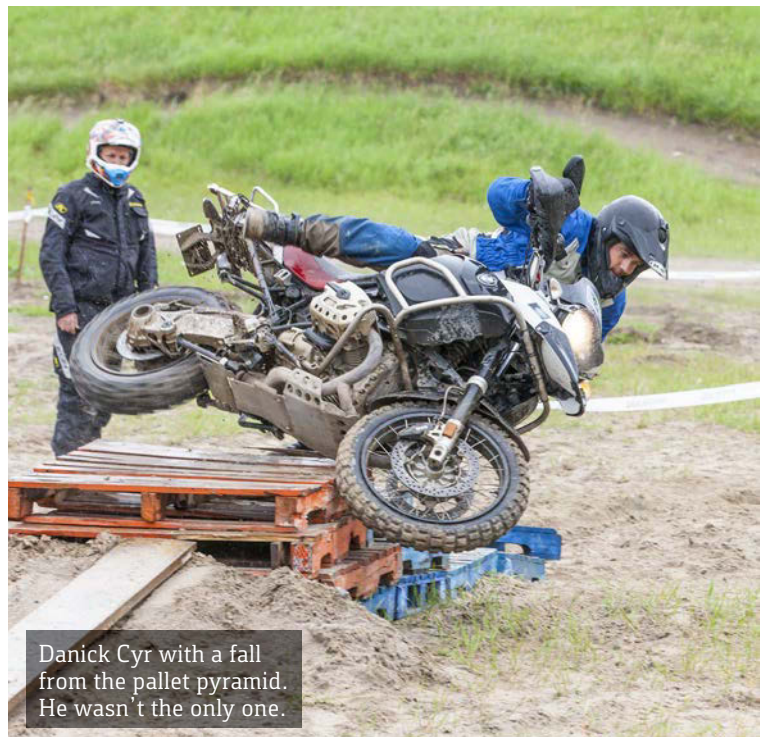
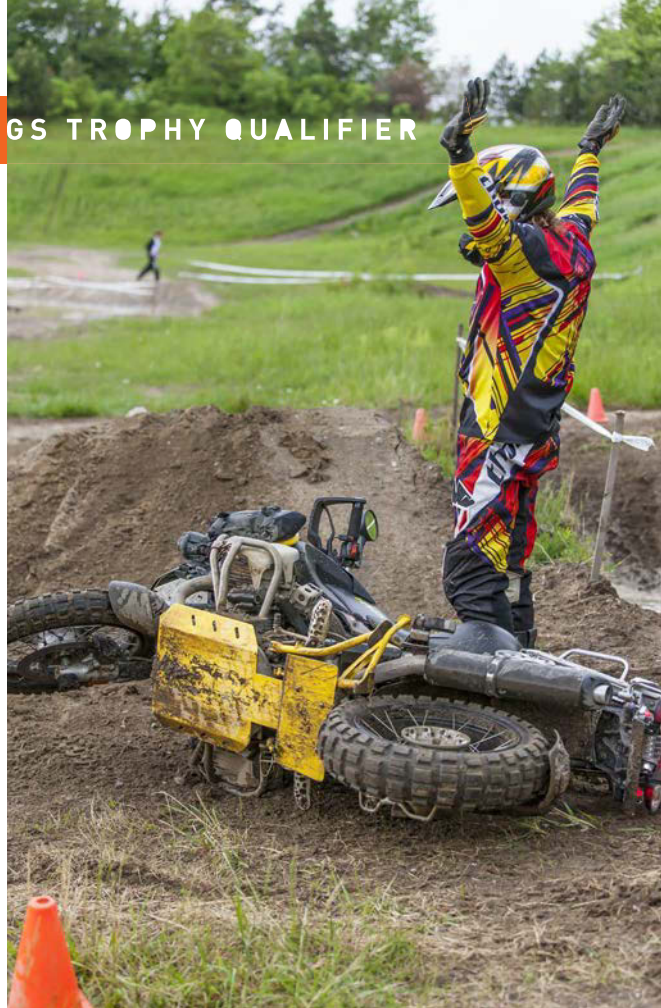


Patrice Glaude coaches while Nixon gives Jerry Van Schie a friendly shove. Nixon's reward? A mud bath.



Despite staring at his front tire (a cardinal sin), Nixon escapes the tiger pit.





Danick Cyr with a fall from the pallet pyramid. He wasn't the only one.



Marc Villeneuve makes quick work of the log pull.



The first challenge, however, does not involve riding. As rain begins to fall we're asked a series of questions to test general mechanical knowledge. The scenarios are elaborate. "Imagine you're in a Malaysian rainforest," Smout says, "and a giant snake is chasing you across a river. The engine of your liquid-cooled R1200GS suddenly stops in the middle of the river. You're alone and have no cell reception. What are three possible reasons the engine stopped, and how do you fix those problems?" Pens scratch on paper, though we never do take up possible answers. (I could tell you the rest of the questions, but what's the point? They'll have switched them by the next GS Challenge anyway.)

Next is the log pull, which, as you'd guess, involves attaching a nine-foot log to your bike and dragging it through a section of sand to a pair of pylons at the far end. Fastest time wins, with bigger, more powerful bikes clearly having an advantage. A tractor-like R1200GS Adventure hauls the log like it's a pencil, and the plentiful torque of the F800GS's 798 cc parallel twin completes the pull with no problems.

For the G450X, however, it's not so straightforward; there's no obvious place to affix a strap. The rider struggles to hold the log under his left arm while taking off, but it slips from his grasp. He gets the log in another headlock, this time wrapping the strap around his wrist, and completes a terrifying run that has onlookers cringing at what could have gone horribly wrong. (The log pull is a last-minute addition, thought up by Smout at three o'clock in the morning. "I wanted to level the playing field," he says. The rider of the G450X finishes outside the top three.)

The next event involves a steep hill climb with an abrupt left at the crest, then another hard left and steep descent with an immediate left at the base, followed by a deep dip through a muddy "tiger pit," a hairpin right, and (finally) a ride up and over a dirt mound. Sounds too easy, right? Let's add trials-style penalty points for foot dabs and the like, as well as timing the event for slowness. Sense a trend?

Many challenges centre on balance and control, areas of paramount importance when riding big, heavy bikes off-road. Riders with trials experience shine in this event, though the tiger pit and hairpin catch a few competitors out. I hesitate twice — once before the descent, again prior to the pit — and am penalized for putting a foot down. Still, encouragement from crew and competitors continues. I'm a little wide on the final turn, get hung up on the side of the mound, and topple to the dirt. There's a collective *awwwwww*, then a round of applause at my effort. The same goes for every participant; each is congratulated for having attempted something difficult, and cheered when they succeed.

Sunday's third challenge is changing a tire, a necessary skill, Smout says, for would-be adventure riders. It's a seemingly simple task made difficult by racing the clock. Needed tools are on tap, though not necessarily experience; for some, it's their first time prying rubber from a rim. Even for those with the knowhow, the added pressure of a stopwatch can lead to pinched tubes and slow leaks. To avoid a DNF each tire is checked to ensure it holds the required 15 pounds of pressure after two minutes. Not all pass the test.

Next we're off to the ominously named Motocross Mounds From Hell, a challenging trials-type course made more difficult by persistent rain. "It was tough when it was dry," Smout says. Now the hollows have filled with water as deep as the bike's axles, the rain transforming dirt into mud the consistency of bacon grease congealed in a skillet. There are numerous camelbacks that test

OF CHALLENGES AND TROPHIES

Confounded by this BMW off-road tomfoolery? Here's what the GS Challenge and GS Trophy are all about.

GS Challenges are annual events, three of which are held across Canada. These are not races, but a series of skill-testing off-road activities. Competition is open to BMW owners, although those with other makes can participate but not win. Pro off-roaders can also participate, but likewise cannot win.

This year's events took place in Barrie, Ontario; Rocky Mountain House, Alberta; and Montreal. This is a qualification year for the GS Trophy, with the top three finishers from each region advancing to the GS Trophy qualifier, to be held at Mosport during BMW Motorrad Days, August 14–16. (The same date and location as the Canadian Superbike season finale doubleheader.) The top three emerging from Mosport will represent Canada at the 2016 BMW



Motorrad GS Trophy, along with an accompanying journalist, who in this case is me.

The GS Trophy is an international biennial event, the location of which changes with each installment. It was held in Tunisia in 2008, South Africa in 2010, South America in 2012, and Canada in 2014. It's heading to Southeast Asia in spring 2016.

The Trophy is a grueling weeklong adventure rally, three-quarters of which is typically off-road, with more difficult challenges interspersed throughout. Last year's Trophy involved 16 teams (Canada finished ninth), and it continues to escalate in terms of scale and difficulty with every running. In 2016, 18 national teams are participating, plus — for the first time — an international all-female team. BMW foots the bill for airfare, food, and lodging, and supplies the latest R1200GS in full off-road trim for each Trophy participant to abuse.

Is it a massive marketing exercise? Absolutely. GS Challenges and Trophies alike strengthen the go-anywhere, do-anything mythos of the GS brand — even though few owners ever ride this way. "For those who do," says Heiner Faust, head of sales and marketing for BMW Motorrad, "we want to give them a place to play."

Interested? It's too late to make the 2016 Trophy team, but you could take part in one of next year's GS Challenges to begin preparation for the 2017 qualifying events, or to see if the rigours of adventuring are for you. Even if you've never ridden off-road, you're welcome at a Challenge. You will most certainly fall, but with lots of hands to help, you definitely won't fail.

— James Nixon



the integrity of skid plates, a grating sound like nails scraped on a chalkboard filtering through the surrounding trees. Sharp turns are caked with slick mud and wet rocks are as slippery as ice. Once these heavy bikes start to slip they're oh-so hard to correct.

What's the secret to conquering the Hades Humps? Complete control, as exemplified by accomplished trials rider Clint McBride of Dualsport Plus in Brantford. McBride makes his R1200GS dance around the course, flowing smoothly through puddles, pausing atop crests to consider his next move. He makes it look almost easy, and I try to mimic his lines on my attempt.

It doesn't go well. I head for the higher, drier line through the first corner but don't carry enough speed and the GS hits the deck with a sickening smack. Falling is an automatic DNF, but I'll be damned if I'm stopping after barely starting. Marshals help me hoist the bike and I soldier on through the muck. I have another heavy fall, and get hung up on the rocks, but cries of "Eyes up! Eyes up! Almost there!" keep me going and I complete the course. I'm muddied and bruised, but not beaten, despite full demerits.

The idea, after all, is that the GS Challenge be difficult. The qualification process is designed to whittle away competitors, leaving behind a handful of highly skilled riders. "Only a few people should be able to complete these challenges with few or no demerits," Glaude says.


Case in point: the day's final challenge, a Glaude-designed trials course complete with tight turns, water pits, a teeter-totter, tire pit, log jumps, pallet pyramid, and concrete culvert climb. It's *incredibly* challenging and demands precise clutch control—especially in the sodden conditions. Competitors are genuinely struggling and very few make it through without accruing maximum demerit points, let alone *actually* completing the course. The pallet pyramid claims the most victims. Tires spin uselessly on the slick wood; you must gain enough momentum to carry you up and over *before* beginning the climb. But with very little lead up following a tight left turn, many run out of steam

and get hung up atop the pile, bikes and riders tumbling spectacularly to either side. When a rider conquers the climb he's greeted with resounding cheers, regardless of his final score.

Witnessing so many crashes is sobering, and though there are no injuries, it's a reminder that we're playing a serious game. When my turn comes I bypass the pyramid and culvert, knowing they're beyond my skillset. I don't build enough speed for the final short, steep climb and just as the front wheel reaches the crest the rear becomes buried in the side of a dirt mound. Five sets of hands take hold of the bike, helping to heave it loose as the rear tire searches for traction to complete the climb. When it's all over I feel euphoric relief, as though a troublesome tooth has been pulled.

Our F800GS has fared well this weekend with only some minor cosmetic damage (slightly bent shift lever, scratched body panels, front turn signals popped out of place), despite several heavy falls. In truth, it's proved itself much more capable off-road than I am. I leave the GS Challenge humbled about my off-road abilities, but with increased confidence at having persevered and with a renewed desire to improve my skills. The event is demanding, but most worthwhile things in life are. It's a peculiar dynamic in which participants are competing against each other, but also encouraged to work together as a team.

Even so, someone has to win. The top three advancing from the Ontario GS Challenge to the GS Trophy qualifier are Jerry Van Schie on his R1200GS Adventure, and Tim Burke and Marc Villeneuve, each on an R1200GS. "It was so much harder than last time," Van Schie says. "I was happy just to be competing, but I'm thrilled to be moving on." Villeneuve seems enthused, but also calm and confident, having the look of someone whose journey has just begun. And Tim Burke, whom I rode with on Saturday, is also pleased, but looking ahead. We exchange numbers and part ways with loose plans about training together.

When I arrive home a text is waiting; he's already signed up for another weekend rally event. "There's off-road training the day before," he says. "You should come." 

Ninja 300

Whether referring to engine or chassis performance, or the latest available technology, the name "Ninja" implies the very best that Kawasaki has to offer. In the case of the all-new Ninja 300, it means a larger-displacement 296cc engine with the power and torque to eclipse everything in its class.



CAMERON CYCLE

2232 DAVIS ROAD
PETERBOROUGH, ON
TEL.: 1 705 876-1171
WWW.CAMERON-CYCLE.COM

STURGESS CYCLE

615 KING STREET WEST
HAMILTON, ON
TEL.: 905 522-0503
WWW.STURGESSONLINE.COM

PRO-AM MOTORSPORTS

630 46 AVE. N.E. UNIT #117
CALGARY, AB
TEL.: 403 277-0099
WWW.PRO-AM.CA

EDGE PERFORMANCE CENTRE

19890 HWY 11
BRADFORD, ON
TEL.: 905 775-1717
WWW.EDGE-PERFORMANCE.CA
KAWASAKI 5 STAR DEALER
TOP QUALITY SALES AND SERVICE

BURNABY KAWASAKI

7771 EDMONDS STREET
BURNABY, BC
1 888 852-8165
WWW.BURNABYKAWASAKI.COM

TWO WHEEL MOTORSPORT

5624 HWY 6 NORTH
GUELPH, ON
1 888 469-1128 EXT #3
WWW.TWOWHEELMOTORSPORT.CA

BURLINGTON CYCLE

2201 PLAINS ROAD EAST
BURLINGTON, ON
TEL.: 905 637-6208
WWW.BURLINGTON-CYCLE.COM



Kawasaki

CYCLE CANADA

READ THE DIGITAL EDITION ON
YOUR SMARTPHONE OR TABLET!
DOWNLOAD OUR APP NOW



Apple iOS



Android



Online



Playbook



Windows 8



pocketmags.com
Discover Read Enjoy

Alcohol was a FACTOR

When you're a long way from home, the advice of strangers should be carefully considered

BY TED BISHOP

It was a hard ride down to Oregon: the wind in the Crowsnest Pass bobbed my head back and forth like a guy throwing pizza dough hand to hand, and by the time I got to Coeur d'Alene I had grooves in my lower butt cheeks from the buckles on the saddlebag straps — a Ducati Monster doesn't have much cargo space. At the Visitor's Center I thought I was getting an electric shock from the counter, but it was just the tingling from gripping the handlebars. As with every motorcycle tour I wondered why I was doing this.

I was working on a book called *The Social Life of Ink* and when I learned about a man in Utah who made Gutenberg-replica printing presses I had to go. The printer, Steve Pratt, refused email and avoided the phone so this was a good excuse to extend a ride. I was going to the Tynda motorcycle rally anyway and thought, *Easy: I'll bop down to Eugene, Oregon, nip across to Utah and swing home to Edmonton. A big triangle with a flat base.* Somehow I had failed to notice that the Pratt ranch was far south of Eugene, and that I would be crossing the great Nevada desert.

But of course the only way I get anywhere interesting is through wilful self-delusion — an essential character trait for both motorcyclists and writers. If you allowed yourself to think realistically about the enterprise you would never start.

The best stretch came when I dropped down through eastern Oregon and found route 395, a glorious 117-mile road that climbs and winds and falls through pine forests from Pendleton to Mt. Vernon, and fetched up in a town called John Day, at the El Teulito restaurant, tired but happy with a Negra Modelo, chips, salsa, and a chicken fajita, in a booth with sagging Naugahyde that put the table at my chest. (After years of wondering I looked up *naugahyde* on my Oxford English Dictionary phone app. No Nagas had been killed in the making of this booth. Naugahyde is "the proprietary name for a material used in upholstery, consisting of a fabric base coated with a layer of rubber or vinyl resin and finished with a leather-like grain"; the stuff comes from Naugatuck, a town in Connecticut where rubber is manufactured.)

The Naugahyde wasn't the only thing that was worn out. When I left the motorcycle rally I nicked the upper-right corner of California, riding south from Klamath Falls through the Medoc National Forest to Reno, Nevada. A long day on a tight bike, and as I steered it into the Nugget casino, shoulders knotted, hands clenched, legs in a tight zed, I thought I might just fall over. The Ducati and I weren't as young as we once were. I was coming up on 60 (years, not mph) and knew this was my last tour on the Monster.



Ted Bishop's book *The Social Life of Ink: Culture, Wonder, and our Relationship with the Written Word* was published by Penguin-Random House Canada in 2014.

An English professor a long way from home on an Italian motorcycle. Something had to go wrong. And it did.



The next day rain started to fall and for the first time ever the bike began to buck and stumble. Water in the fuel line? The engine stalled and caught with each downshift, making the rear tire grab and slip on the wet pavement. The desert was cold, and I'd taken on too much territory. I coughed into Ely and pulled up in front of the Hotel Nevada.

There were two characters out front, protected from the rain by the sign that jutted out over them: FRESHHOME MADEPIZZA 24HRS. It looked like the lone bench was their home. The stocky guy with a buzz cut sat, the other guy, tall and skinny, in a plaid shirt, baseball cap and glasses, leaned forward like a prof at a non-existent lectern, bony finger extended, lecturing his colleague.

Maybe that's how I'd wind up. As an English prof I'd spent my life immersed in ink and now I'd become obsessed with the stuff. "A substance so common we never really see it!" I'd say, rattling on about capillary action and ballpoint pen inventor Lazlo Biro. People were starting to back away from me at dinner parties.

I'd planned to toss off a slim volume in a year; now I was three years into it and the book was spreading like a blob. If I'd known the project would take me another five years, take me to China, Uzbekistan, and the edge of Tibet, I'd have bagged it right then and joined the guys on the bench.

I checked in (10 percent discount for bikers and a free margarita) and read the pamphlet: built in 1929, the Hotel Nevada was the tallest building in the state. The four-storey tall mural of a six-gun toting burro flipping flapjacks over a fire was famous, and Jimmy Stewart and Mickey Rooney had stayed here. Swell, but my cramped room with its feeble lamp and single kitchen chair hadn't been upgraded since the Jimmy Stewart stutter left the screen.

At the Chinese restaurant across the street I ordered hot-and-sour soup and my spoon clattered against the little bowl. I was still chilled through. I'd hoped my bike would dry out but the clouds settled in and the rain fell ceaselessly. Back at the room I sat on a hard kitchen chair wedged between the bed and the wall, and wrote by the light of the neon sign outside. I was on Route 50, America's Loneliest Highway.

In the morning the bike would not start. The battery was strong, and the engine cranked and cranked but would not catch. *Ka-chuhh, Ka-chuhh*. It sounded like a washing machine in rinse cycle.

"Dude, sounds like you got water in the fuel line. You can get a bottle of alcohol for ninety-nine cents at the drug store across the street."

The skinny guy I'd seen sitting in front of the hotel yesterday had appeared at my side. He looked like 50 miles of bad road and had that musty homeless smell. Without asking he bent down and pulled off my spark plug lead.

"It's wet in there, Dude."

I asked if there was an auto parts store, he directed me up the street, and I bought a bottle of starter fluid to spray in the carbs. "How much did you pay for that? Six bucks! That alcohol, ninety-nine cents, would work just as well." He looked like he would know. I phoned the local motorcycle mechanic, André, who came in five minutes. We took off the air filter, and sprayed the fluid into the carbs. I knew this was not good for the engine.

When I lived in Kingston I'd had an old 356 Porsche that sucked the Ontario humidity into its carbs, and in the wet fall I would get flames out the top of the motor when I used this stuff. Still, it dried things out. The engine snapped and popped, almost-

but-not-quite caught. André looked concerned, solicitous. "Here's what I'd like to do. I'd like to take your bike into my shop where I can have a proper look at it. Not out here in a parking lot." What to do? He was oily and a titch too eager. But I said okay.

"Dude," said Dave (I'd learned his name) when André had gone, "Don't *do* this. All these small towns are hurting. Since the recession hit there's nothing going on. If he gets your bike in his shop it's going to be all day and at least a couple hundred bucks. I'm telling you, ninety-nine cents at the drugstore...."

He was right. Those had been dollar signs in André's helpful eyes.

I ran across the street, bought a bottle of rubbing alcohol (\$1.69, not 99¢ — maybe Dave got a special rate) and poured half into the gas tank.

Ka-chook, ka-chook, ka-chook — sounded like hiccups — *ka-chookBAM ka-chookBAM* — it was catching — *chookBAM! chookBAM! BAM-BAM-BAM!*

I didn't know if the bike was running or blowing up. It roared and snapped and spat black smoke through the pipes and out the top of the engine.

"Why is it doing that?" I shouted to Dave.

"Because the air filter isn't on yet."

Right. Soon the explosions turned to normal combustion as the water in the line cleared, and the engine settled into a silky idle.

"Best I've heard it in years," I said to Dave.


I buckled my panniers on quickly before André could return with his trailer. I thought of all those zombie movies where bad things happen in small towns. When I was almost loaded Dave said, "Since I helped and all, d'you think you could spare a fiver? Or a ten ...?"

"Nope," I said and he backed away. "I'm giving you twenty. You saved me money, and a lot of time, and somebody messing around with my engine. Thanks!" I gave him the money, cinched my tank bag, and was going to wave a final goodbye but he was already heading back toward his bench.

Out in the desert I was alone for long stretches, and I wondered if my great-uncle Jeremiah had travelled that way. In 1852, age 27, he had taken the stagecoach from Ontario out to Sacramento, where instead of panning for gold in the California gold rush he bought into the Sacramento Bee newspaper, taking notes as a reporter in the morning and setting type in the afternoon. A friend said, "I guess you come by your interest in ink honestly."

His trip would have taken three jostling weeks. You perched on a bench seat, your knees dovetailed with the other passengers if you were in the rear-facing front row, you swayed with only a leather strap for a backrest if you were in the middle row, and you were forced to get out and push up hills and through mud.

You were asked not to drink but to share the bottle if you did, not to spit tobacco into the wind, not to cuss in front of ladies, not to snore on your neighbour's shoulder, not to hog the buffalo robes or shoot your guns out the window (it spooked the horses). His ride made my discomforts on a motorcycle look mild.

The rain had passed, leaving beautiful washed-green sage and ridges soaked to a deep burnt sienna. High passes, big sky, and not the place for a breakdown. The Duc ran flawlessly but I still had the bottle of alcohol in my pocket, just like Dave, just in case. 

PRESS LAUNCH

HUSQVARNA FE 501S





Legalize *it*

James Nixon samples
Husqvarna's FE 501S dual sport
and lives to tell the tale

HUSQVARNA FE 501S

The engine is KTM but orange, it is not. Expect more parent-brand differentiation in the future, they say.



I must be cursed, I'm thinking, as I round a blind corner on a dirt road in Southern California hill country. At least that's what I *would* be thinking, except there's no time. A Chevy Suburban is bearing down on me. The driver has cut the corner and we're on a collision course at the apex. I jab the brake pedal to step the rear out and aim the front tire at a wedge of space the size of a pizza slice between the SUV and the cliff face. Then I close my eyes.

Enjoy this review, because it may be the last time I'm invited to a press event involving Husqvarna or sister company KTM. Excluding the dirt bike tumbles of my misspent youth (has anyone *not* misspent their youth?) I've had three motorcycle crashes. Two were at KTM press launches (1190 Adventure and RC 390) and now, at my first press ride for white-blue-and-yellow-is-the-new-orange Husqvarna, I scratch up a spiffy dual sport. I'm three for three with KTM umbrella brands. How did it come to this?

It's Dick Burleson's fault — not for the crash (he was sheltering from the rain under a canopy at California's Cahuilla Creek motocross track — our departure point — when that happened), but for my being on Husky's bigger dual sport, the FE 501S. Burleson, who rode Huskys to eight consecutive American National Enduro titles from 1974 to 1981, comes upon me prior to the press ride as I'm waffling between the 501S and its slightly smaller sibling, the FE 350S. He looks me up and down. "You're a big fella," he says. "If I were you, I'd go for the 501. Not so revved out on the highway and more low-end power for someone of your, uh, size."

Husky, unsurprisingly, has followed KTM's approach to dual sports. Both brands are well known for off-road

prowess; instead of dumbing down enduro bikes to make them suitable for street use, they've left well enough alone and added the bare minimum to make those bikes street legal (think KTM 500 EXC). That means the FE 501S adds mirrors (or, in this test bike's case, a single left-hand mirror on a nifty swiveling ball-joint allowing it to be tucked away when not needed), a horn, turn signals, and brake lights to the potent enduro package of the FE 501. And at \$11,649, you can be street legal for only \$500 more than the sans-S version — a fair price for increased versatility.

I listen to Burleson and swing a leg over the 501S's rock-hard saddle. A firm seat improves rider manoeuvrability, but this perch is simply sadistic. At 970 mm, it's also sky-scrapingly tall, though a 32-inch inseam and an exceptionally narrow seat allow me to get the balls of both feet on the ground. (Shorter riders should carefully consider where they stop, lest a flailing foot fail to find purchase.) I turn the key, which is located in front of the fork tube on the right side of the headlight nacelle, and a minimal LCD screen shimmers to life. Supplied info is spartan (speed, time, odo, trip meters), but you should probably keep your eyes on the trail anyway. Controls are as simple as they come and thumbing the electric starter (a kick starter is available as a retro-fit accessory) brings the beast to life.

At its heart is a four-stroke, liquid-cooled, 510 cc, SOHC single sitting in a double-cradle chrome-moly frame. (Coupled with a composite polyamide subframe, the chassis is said to allow "precise" longitudinal flex and provide better feedback.) The same thumper powers the KTM 500 EXC, but does that really matter? You can scoff at shared technology, or you can take heart that it's a

TAKING TO THE STREETS

Husky's on-road offerings are few — for now

For most, the Husqvarna brand name evokes images of dirt bikes — motocross, off-road, enduro. (For the rest, the association will be with sewing machines.) But those savvy Swedes are slowly shifting Husky's pure-dirt image to include street offerings. "We have big plans for the brand," says Florian Burguet, managing director of Husqvarna Canada (and KTM Canada).

And dual sports — the FE 501S and its 350 sibling — are just the beginning. Though not street-legal, the FS 450 supermoto is already available in some markets (though not in Canada). The 701 Supermoto made its debut last fall at EICMA, followed by a teaser campaign showing the 701 skating around a frozen lake on studded tires. The 701 is not yet in production but is rumoured to be coming to Canada as a 2016 model.

But the 701 isn't what got us excited during EICMA. Husky CEO Stephan Pierer also unveiled two arresting concept machines, the 401 Svartpilen (Black Arrow) and 401 Vitpilen (White Arrow), bikes in the scrambler and café racer styles.



They're dramatic departures from what we've come to expect from Husky (though the brand has produced its fair share of street bikes since 1903). According to Blaine Schuttler, sales manager of Husqvarna North America, these concept bikes provide "a clear indication of the future direction of the company."

Husqvarna is taking to the streets. We're told the initial expansion of Husky's street model range would follow the same format as its off-road bikes, meaning shared platforms with KTM, eventually followed by disparate evolution within each brand — of which the Arrow concepts are a case study. A Husky staffer confessed that at the heart of each Arrow is a KTM Duke engine and frame — given the 401 designation, presumably from the 390 Duke. Looking at the end results, who would've thought? Those smooth surfaces and flowing lines are decidedly un-KTM, and, well, very Husqvarna.

— James Nixon

For now they're prototypes, but production doesn't seem an impossibility. (Is it just us, or do you see the ghost of 1970s Craig Vetter in this pair too?)





proven mill. It readily accepts being revved out along the hard-packed dirt roads leading to the trailhead, some of the more accomplished off-road riders even surfing the 501S around corners like a flat tracker. A smooth torque curve and precise throttle response provide a sense of complete control. The 501S thrills with a swift surge of sure power, but it never surprises. Clutch pull is light, shifting through the six-speed gearbox precise, and fuelling spot on. This bike can be as wild or tame as your right wrist commands.

When the trail narrows to an undulating single track that looks like a moguls section on steroids, the 501S shines due to the copious low-end torque on tap. I discover just how much is on tap the hard way. In a discipline where momentum is your friend, I make the mistake of pausing to catch my breath at the base of a boulder-strewn hill. After letting out the clutch and settling the throttle, the 501S crawls slowly and surely up the steep incline with a *chug, chug, chug*—no protestations, just steady progress.


Sure, the FE 501S shares its engine with the 500 EXC—but if you think it's just a white KTM, you're mistaken. The biggest difference (besides a subdued colour palette and fun-to-say Swedish brand name) is also arguably the most important when it comes to off-road performance: suspension. The 501S has a linkage-equipped dual compression control shock (the EXC has a link-less system) and closed-cartridge fork (open-cartridge for the EXC). Both are from house brand WP. The shock is fully adjustable and, says Husky, was specifically developed for its enduro lineup for "excellent characteristics in fast and flowing sections, steep downhills, and extremely rocky and bumpy sections." While I have no complaints after a ride including all of the above, other journalists grouse that the fork is too soft—but fear not; Husky has you covered with tool-less clickers on top of the fork tubes to fine-tune compression and rebound damping.

The roughest terrain on offer, a steep, gnarly, switchback descent, tests but doesn't tax the 501S (the same can't be said for its

riders). The shock has 330 mm of travel and soaks up even the worst bumps, and the fork (300 mm of travel) keeps the front wheel from deflecting—the bike will go wherever you point it. Its svelte proportions and light weight (claimed 113.5 kg dry) make it extremely manoeuvrable, and good feel from the 220 mm rear brake (a 260 mm disc sits out front) helps me get down the hill without going fanny over fender. An hour and a half on the trails has my legs shaking with fatigue, but the 501S delivers.

Until, of course, I end up in a game of chicken with that Suburban. When I close my eyes to shoot the gap the space shrinks to the width of the handlebar. I feel the right handguard grating across the rock face, and then feel a sharp pain as the cliff forces the brake lever closed on my hand like a nut in a nutcracker, which simultaneously tucks the front and sends me shoulder-first into the rock. Somehow I don't collide with the SUV. The driver hops out, apologizes, and asks if I'm OK. "I'm fine," I mutter through gritted teeth as I heave the bike upright. I get the sidestand down and turn, ready to launch into a tirade. But he's already gone.

Robbed of verbal retribution, I unleash my fury with a proper right-wrist wringing of the 501S when we return to the tarmac. For a dual sport that's undeniably more off- than on-road, this bike is surprisingly well behaved on pavement. Naturally, those knobbies feel a little vague while cornering, and there's some vibration through the seat and bar while cruising at 75 mph, but neither is untoward for a hardcore dual sport. Even when it's revved out to 90 mph the engine isn't overly stressed, though some headshake encourages more sensible speeds.

Though the Husqvarna logo is often confused with a crown, it's actually a gun sight, a nod to the company's gun-making history. With the FE 501S Husky took a proven enduro design and sacrificed nothing to make it street-legal. The result is a *truly* capable high-capacity dual sport. For serious off-road enthusiasts, that's right on target. 

BORN ON THE TRACK. RAISED ON THE STREETS.



- GSX-R DNA Combined With Cutting Edge Style, Comfort and Versatility.
- Compact ABS and dual 310mm front disk brakes offer maximum stopping power.
- High Output 749cm³ power plant from the GSX-R750 is found in every GSX-S750.
- SUZUKI EXHAUST TUNING butterfly valves enhance torque and acceleration response.
- Inverted front forks + 7-way adjustable rear shock offer 145mm ground clearance.
- Sculpted bodywork, a vented front fender, chiseled fuel tank and angular tail section emphasizes its street fighter character.
- The all new GSX-S750 ABS is an all new riding experience.

Check it out at your local Suzuki dealer or at suzuki.ca today!



2015 GSX-S750A (Metallic Matte Black)

**THE ALL NEW
GSX-S750A**

\$8,699
MSRP*



LARRY'S SMALL ENGINE

286270 COUNTY ROAD 10

MONO, ON

TEL.: 519 941-1517

WWW.LARRYSSMALLENGINES.CA

TWO WHEEL MOTORSPORT

5624 HWY 6 NORTH

GUELPH, ON

1 888 469-1128 EXT #3

WWW.TWOWHEELMOTORSPORT.CA

READY SUZUKI

430 HENSALL CIRCLE

MISSISSAUGA, ON

TEL: 905 896-1600

1 855 896-0430

WWW.READYSUZUKI.COM

WHEELSPORT

1390 YOVILLE DRIVE

OTTAWA, ON

TEL.: 613 841-9400

WWW.WHEELSPORT.CA

STURGESS CYCLE

615 KING STREET WEST

HAMILTON, ON

TEL.: 905 522-0503

WWW.STURGESSIONLINE.COM

CAMERON CYCLE

2232 DAVIS ROAD

PETERBOROUGH, ON

TEL.: 1 705 876-1171

WWW.CAMERON-CYCLE.COM

PRO CYCLE

550 WINDMILL ROAD

DARTMOUTH, NS

TEL.: 902 468-2518

WWW.PROCYCLEONLINE.COM



WWW.SUZUKI.CA | [f](https://www.facebook.com/SuzukiCanada) /SuzukiCanada

Prices are Manufacturers Suggested Retail pricing for base model (GSX-S750A) @ \$8,699. PDI charges from \$132 to \$528, freight charges from \$110 to \$208, taxes, license, insurance, applicable fees and registration are extra dependent on model. Specifications, product features and colours are subject to change without notice. Read your owner's manual carefully and remember to observe all safety regulations. See your participating Authorized Suzuki dealer for availability and complete details. Suzuki. Way of Life!

CYCLE CANADA

IT'S ALSO A WEBSITE!

News
Tests and Features
Comparison tool
Wallpapers
Photos
Videos

Subscribe Online

WWW.CYCLECANADAWEB.COM

[facebook.com/cyclecanada](https://www.facebook.com/cyclecanada)

[Follow us @cyclecanada](https://twitter.com/cyclecanada)

[pinterest.com/cyclecanada](https://www.pinterest.com/cyclecanada)

FEELIN' GROOVY

GLEN





MILD-MANNERED MAYHEM

James Nixon has his first California motocross experience at Glen Helen raceway. Now he's digging another

It's the most exciting opening sequence in all of racing. Forty motocross bikes lined up abreast, engines singing, riders taut with anticipation. The gates drop, clutches are released, and bikes freed from the shackles of the starting line spring forth en masse in a violent blast of dirt. Each rider has high hopes for the headlong dash down the starting straight, all vying for that *one* spot, the inside line of the first corner — the mythical holeshot.

It's especially dramatic at Glen Helen Raceway in San Bernardino, California, where the opening corner sweeps up and across a hillside. It's unmistakable, partly because of the 10-foot-high Hollywood-style Glen Helen sign sitting atop the hill. The venue hosted its first national race in 1993 and was this year's second stop on the AMA Pro motocross tour. The track is kinked like an unruly garden hose and undulates with the lay of the land, including a soaring climb up 400-foot-high Mt. St. Helen. Some of the ascents and descents are more reminiscent of an enduro than a motocross race, and the track has a reputation for becoming gnarled in a hurry. "You'll always have this sort of love-hate relationship with Glen Helen simply because of how difficult it is and how rewarding it feels to achieve success here," two-time series champ Ryan Villopoto says.



A Costco canopy and an air mattress in the back of a pickup. The privateer racer is the soul of the series.



I've seen supercross live and it struck me as being more about the show — lasers, smoke machines, pyrotechnics, and energy drink girls in tasteless pleather outfits — than about the racing. Prior to Glen Helen, however, I hadn't seen a motocross race in person. Would it leave me feeling as dull and lifeless as the Dome when the Jays are in a slump? Would it just be outdoor supercross?

The difference is palpable with a stroll through the paddock. Privateers and pro teams alike are in the open air, not buried in the concrete bowels of a stadium. You can hear a mechanic curse a stubborn bolt, feel the cool kiss of mist on your skin as you pass a bike being stung with the spray of a pressure washer. Everywhere you walk the high-pitched song of engines being warmed slithers through your ears in waves, quickly rolling to a crest and coming back to idle like stones settling at the bottom of a hill. Some emit an angrier, more insistent scream, like an old wind-up siren, and flare your nostrils with the sharp tang of two-stroke smoke.

There's a lot to see at a motocross national beyond a full slate of racing. The scale of a factory team's setup is impressive — a semi or two, a swarm of mechanics, a hospitality area for family and VIPs. But what's more impressive is the privateer wrenching on his own bike between motos, his face covered in grime save for the reverse-raccoon effect of his goggles. He'll sleep in his van tonight, or in a tent perched in the bed of his pickup, and go home tomorrow without a trophy, but with pride at having given his all at Glen Helen.



The first corner dash is one of the biggest thrills in all of racing, claims Nixon. That most of the riders — most of the time — make it around the first bend is a testament to big elbows and lots of nerve.





FZ-07

The newest member of the "FZ family", the all new 2015 FZ-07 is a motorcycle that brings fun, affordability and riding enjoyment back to the street. This versatile naked roadster offers deep engine torque and a comfortable riding position in a lightweight, easy to handle sports chassis. It's the perfect machine for both new and experienced riders alike who are looking for outstanding value.



G.A. CHECKPOINT

3034 ST. JOHNS STREET
PORT MOODY, BC
TEL.: 604 461-3434
WWW.GACHECKPOINT.COM

PRO CYCLE

550 WINDMILL ROAD
DARTMOUTH, NS
TEL.: 902 468-2518
WWW.PROCYCLEONLINE.COM

BURLINGTON CYCLE

2201 PLAINS ROAD EAST
BURLINGTON, ON
TEL.: 905 637-6208
WWW.BURLINGTON-CYCLE.COM

PRO-AM MOTORSPORTS

630 46 AVE. N.E. UNIT #117
CALGARY, AB
TEL. 403 277-0099
WWW.PRO-AM.CA

TWO WHEEL MOTORSPORT

5624 HWY 6 NORTH
GUELPH, ON
1 888 469-1128 EXT #3
WWW.TWOWHEELMOTORSPORT.CA

READY YAMAHA POWERSPORTS

430 HENSALL CIRCLE
MISSISSAUGA, ON
TEL.: 905 896-1600
1 855 896-0430
WWW.READYYAMAHA.COM



CYCLE CANADA

CANADA'S LEADING MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

3 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE:

INTERNET: MAG.CYCLECANADAWEB.COM

PHONE: 1 855 965.9494

FAX: 450 965.9009





Then there are the spectators, who throng to the venue in the thousands (Saturday's estimated attendance was 20,000). Fathers buy t-shirts for themselves and toy bikes for their kids in vendor's alley. Mothers push strollers and set up shop in the infield in a sea of telescoping camp chairs (every outdoor store within a 100-mile radius must be sold out). Young children flit about on balance bikes, older ones pop wheelies on bicycles. Others crouch in the dirt and use the plastic spoons from ice cream cups to make mini motocross tracks and then race toys around berms and over jumps, mimicking their heroes.

Fans pepper the hillsides, splayed out on blankets, clustered around coolers overflowing (though not for long) with sweating cans of beer. If they haven't brought their own, they can buy an almost cold one for \$4. They gorge on greasy hot dogs, or dig into gooey masses of nachos or chili cheese fries. There's not a speck of quinoa in sight. There are more people with drinks in hand than without, but in contrast to the motocrossers racing past, the vibe is far from aggressive. The atmosphere is accepting and good-natured. People are here to enjoy the races, not to cause a ruckus, and for many coming to Glen Helen has become a ritual.

"I come every year," says James, from Riverside, California. "Except last year. My truck broke down on the highway and I couldn't make it. But I tried, man. I made a sign that said, 'Please take me to Glen Helen. I promise I won't murder you,' but nobody picked me up." He flips the brim of his hat up and adjusts his shades, his unkempt beard curling into his mouth. "I used to race here and I can't get enough of it. I know a lot of the privateer guys and they know me. It's like a big family."

In addition to today's timed practice sessions, there's an invitational two-stroke race and two motos each for the 250 and

BEHIND THE SCENES

We see them on race day, but what do professional motocrossers do the rest of the time?

It's two days before the round at California's Glen Helen, but by the way the Husqvarna racing team riders prepare for a few practice laps at Cahuilla Creek motocross track, you'd think it was two weeks. They're relaxed, lounging in folding chairs, cracking jokes and cackling as mechanics make adjustments to 250s and 450s. They complain of the cold—a bone-chilling (for southern California) eight degrees—as they don gear. Once on track, they make manoeuvres that would land me in the hospital look lackadaisical, whipping bikes sideways when they get big air, or surfing rear tires along the brinks of berms. And when they return to the pit, they've barely broken a sweat.

According to Husky's Zach Osborne, a 25-year-old Virginia native who turned pro in 2006, "On Monday we do cross training: cycling, running, and gym. Tuesday is moto-oriented, a full day on the motorcycle. Wednesday is a shorter day, a sprint day—starts, sections, that sort of thing. Thursday is super short, if we ride at all. We usually start to taper after Wednesday down into the race, so Thursday is just to work out any kinks. We try to fly out Thursday evening. Friday is completely relaxed, a rest day. Saturday is race day, and either Saturday night or Sunday we come home and start over."

Many top motocrossers compete in both the supercross series, which makes stops at stadiums in the winter and spring, and this, the outdoor motocross series, which runs in the spring and summer. "It's not like cycling or some other sport where you have to be good for one three-week period, or one-week period, or weekend," Osborne says. "You're expected to be on point from the first supercross race until the last outdoor race—basically nine whole months. And it's not like leading up to that we're chilling on the couch. It's a grind, all the time. There's not really any time for rest." There's even less time when, like Osborne, you represent your country in the International Six Days Enduro. "The last two years I've done the ISDE in between. It's been crazy how hectic it's been. I said no this year because the



last two years I haven't taken any proper time off."

Such a busy schedule takes a heavy toll, and being overtaxed can have huge consequences. "In cycling or running or some other endurance sports, there's not really a lot of risk if you're tired," Osborne says. "When you get on the motorcycle there's any risk you can think of. If you're out there and you're tired, dilly-dallying around, you're going to have a crash. It's a delicate mix of going hard enough versus not hard enough, and leaving enough time for recovery. I've always leaned towards overtraining. I had some fitness issues when I first turned pro. Since then I've prided myself on going as hard as I can all the time. But in my old age, I'm leaning towards being more rested but well trained."

Part of being rested, both physically and mentally, is getting away from motocross completely. How does he unwind? "I tried golf," he says, "but I actually get more frustrated when I golf. For me it's fishing, mostly fly-fishing."

The scene in the Husqvarna paddock is very different during Saturday's race at Glen Helen. While Osborne is still smiling as his mechanic preps his bike, the grin looks almost sinister. As he heads to the staging area I wish him good luck, and though he nods in response, I don't think he's actually heard me; his eyes see through me with focused intensity. In his head he's already at the starting line—it's race day, after all, what he's worked all week for.

— James Nixon






450 classes. As riders line up for the start there's a steady-yet-calm press of spectators towards the Glen Helen sign. From here you hear the bikes before you see them, and it's hard to keep your jaw from dropping as 40 bikes hurtle past, three, four, five abreast, all jockeying for position to get the best possible drive out of turn one. As quickly as they've come, they're gone, and the crowd disperses to take in the rest of the race from different vantage points.

There's no rush, really; each moto is 30 minutes long. The intense physicality of motocross racing, coupled with the length of a moto — and that there are *two* motos each round — means motocrossers are some of the best athletes in the world. They display astounding strength, skill, and endurance — and do so with serene grace. They float through

the air in languid fluidity, and if you listen closely you can even hear the gentle *snick* of a gearshift before they land.

Honda's Eli Tomac is dominant on the day, taking both 450 wins by a comfortable margin, but what remains with me is the incredible sense of intimacy you experience watching motocross live. Spectators can get — at Glen Helen, at least — up close to the action, and there really aren't many areas that are off limits. You're close enough to see the riders' faces, smell their bikes' exhaust fumes, and feel the spray of roost striking your chest. (If that doesn't sound appealing, just stand back.) The overall atmosphere — the paddock, the fans, the racing — is intensely *alive*. This summer I'll certainly take in a Canadian motocross national. I hope to see you there. 



BREAKOUT®

Big wheels, big paint and classic drag-bike attitude meet premium modern refinement in this attention-grabbing performance cruiser.

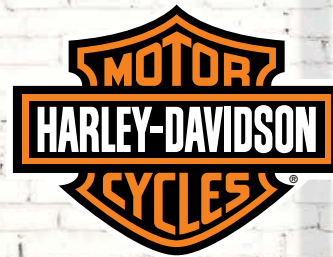


BADLANDS HARLEY-DAVIDSON®

1923 2ND AVENUE
DUNMORE, AB
TEL.: 403 527-9235
1 800 493-1903
WWW.BADLANDSHD.COM

DAVIES HARLEY-DAVIDSON®

8779 YONGE STREET
RICHMOND HILL, ON
TEL.: 905 709-1340
1 866 977-1340
WWW.DAVIESHARLEY.COM



HARLEY-DAVIDSON® WINNIPEG

1377 NIAKWA ROAD EAST
WINNIPEG, MB
TEL.: 204 254-3974
WWW.HARLEYDAVIDSONWINNIPEG.CA

KAMLOOPS HARLEY-DAVIDSON®

1465 IRON MASK ROAD
KAMLOOPS, BC
TEL.: 800 665-3121
WWW.KAMLOOPSHD.COM

JACOX HARLEY-DAVIDSON®

2815 ARGENTIA ROAD
MISSISSAUGA, ON
TEL.: 905 858-0966
JACOXHARLEY.COM



40 YEARS OF LUXURY TOURING

Join Honda in celebrating the release of our 40th Anniversary Gold Wing lineup, marking a milestone achievement in what can only be described as one incredible journey.

FINANCING FROM

3.9%
36-MONTHS*

HONDA

Financial
Services

Barrie Honda Powerhouse

74 Mapleview Drive West
Barrie, ON
Tel.: 705 797-2006
www.powerhouse.barriehonda.com

Team Honda Powerhouse of Milton

170 Steeles Avenue East
Milton, ON
Tel.: 905 864-8588
www.teamhonda.ca

Rocky Mountain Honda Powerhouse

15220 Shaw Road SE
Calgary, AB
Tel.: 403 230-7777
www.rockyhonda.com



Honda Motorcycles &
ATVs Canada



@HondaPowerCA



Always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing, and please respect the environment when riding. Obey the law and read your owner's manual thoroughly. Honda recommends taking a motorcycle rider training course. Honda encourages you to operate your vehicle at all times in a safe and responsible manner and in accordance with the law.

PRESS LAUNCH

APRILIA RSV4 RF

Nipped, Tucked,





and Talking

The motorcycle with the golden voice
gains a little more get-up-and-go

By Neil Graham

The base RSV4 is \$16,995. The bike on which Graham drags a knee is the up-spec RSV4 RF Superpole at \$22,295.



My neck dropped forward as the engineer at the lectern announced that titanium replaced steel as the material for the exhaust valves, and that those valves are larger, too. I straightened my back and snapped my eyes open. The engineer continued. Connecting rods are lighter, the crankshaft heavier, and the compression ratio 13.6:1. (I thought of air being squished into the CNC-machined combustion chamber and — as an occasional migraine sufferer — my temples pulsed in annoyance.) Add this up and claimed crankshaft horsepower shoots from 185 at 12,500 rpm on the old model to 201 at 13,000 rpm on this revised model. And there was more, but I wasn't that keen on hearing it right then. Because while the thought of 16 busy titanium valves is fetching, had they announced that those valves were hand-whittled from teak by Norwegian craftsmen I'd hardly have noticed. All I cared about was that they didn't mess it up.

It's important for me to have relationships with the objects in my life. It's why I appreciate the 50-year-old tools I inherited and why I adhere to vehicle maintenance schedules as if sacrosanct. The RSV4 is my kind of bike. Of late we've had vigorous debate in Readers Write about what some readers deem the pervasive presence of electronics in present day motorcycles. I understand the theoretical basis for the argument, but I suspect it's a stance based more on the vague notion that smartphones and texting and Twitter are a pain in the ass than it is about the characteristics of the motorcycles they criticize. (In very few cases — and here I applaud readers for their honesty — have the complainants actually ridden the motorcycles in question.)

The RSV4 is as *mechanical* a motorcycle as any old thumper or 1940s American V-twin or 1990s Ducati superbike I've owned. In fact, I'll say (again) that the 65-degree, 16-valve V-four is the most charismatic engine ever bolted between frame spars. (Not by a huge margin, however, but for me it remains *the one*.) But a great engine isn't enough to compete in today's superbike field. The 2016 RSV4 RF (the Factory model is no more) that we ride at the Misano circuit in Italy has a multimedia platform app that connects the bike to the Web. In addition to lap times, throttle position, gear position, speed, current horsepower and torque, wheel slippage, lean angle and longitudinal and lateral g-forces, it also allows traction and wheelie control to be tailored for each corner via your phone's GPS capability. And, technophobes, I'm about to toss a propane cylinder onto your pyre of irritability: the bikes at the launch each have an iPhone mounted on the top triple clamp.

Yes, you read that correctly — there is a phone on the triple clamp. Riding a racing circuit and having an abundance of information to review isn't as onerous as you may believe. It's humbling to have your weak spots as a rider revealed, but realizing you're not as heroic with the throttle — or heeled over as far in a corner — as you'd imagined, you can put the information to good use. For me, these tools are less welcome trackside, as I'd rather take the time at home to contemplate where gains can be made. And with only four 20-minute track sessions today, I just want to ride.

With the assistance of an Aprilia technician, race mode is selected (the alternatives are sport and track) because I'm told it has the smoothest throttle response, and at my request he dials in the least restrictive traction and wheelie control settings. And then I'm off.

All superbikes are fast. But where the Aprilia excels is at disguising its *amount* of thrust. The V-four's powerband is so linear and the power arrives with such smoothness that it helps to keep the overexcited pilot in the saddle calm. Misano is a sublime circuit — it's easy enough to learn the rights from the lefts but to master its intricacies would take me a lifetime. Or two. Most challenging is a pair of right kinks that leads to a dead-slow hard right. The first of these kinks is taken flat-out in fourth gear with your knee skimming the ground far north of 200 km/h. Perhaps the horrifyingly fast corner is to blame, but in my first session I arrive at the tight right far too fast and entirely off line. I squeeze the front brake for






as much as I'm worth and trail brake down to the apex with a vigour I rarely muster. And then it's back on the throttle with the traction control facilitating a tidy slide onto the (quickly) approaching straightaway.

If you're hell-bent on owning the most technologically cutting-edge sportbike today the RSV4 likely isn't your first choice. Despite the wizardry of its smartphone-related gadgetry, Yamaha's R1 is just slightly further up the curve of techno-wonderment. And, in terms of power, it's hard to imagine that the RSV4 comes anywhere close to BMW's outrageous power output. And the Aprilia isn't a light machine, either, and its compact seating position is tighter than its Japanese or

German competition's. But if it's not for the racer and not for the owner who needs to own the latest and greatest, then who, exactly, is the Aprilia for?

If abstract notions like mechanical sophistication matter as much to you as they do to me, then the Aprilia jumps to the fore. The RSV4 isn't just a bike to hop on and go quickly — though of course it'll do that. It's a bike that rewards on back roads, or straight roads, or even, as was the case at Misano, while I was exiting the track and downshifting to ride at 60 km/h up pit lane. Hearing that engine on the overrun and then listening to it settle into a muscular idle brings supreme satisfaction. 



PRESS LAUNCH

APRILIA TUONO





MORE and Less

Less a naked, more a never-nude

By Neil Graham




But they've fixed it now. And I can only hope that the designer responsible for styling the original Tuono has found more suitable work — like designing buckets for front-end loaders.

With the embarrassing old beak dispatched, the Tuono, as if to celebrate, treated itself to a three mm overbore, for a displacement of 1,077 cc. Most impressive is the claim of an additional 20 horsepower at 8,000 rpm. Maximum claimed horsepower is 175.

Two variants are available, the Tuono Factory with its Öhlins suspension and the Tuono RR with its Sachs suspenders. Setting its APRC (Aprilia Performance Ride Control) into the Road setting — fitting for a road ride — off we go into the hills above Misano at a very quick trot.

The speed with which you can dispatch distance on a public roadway on a Tuono is remarkable. With a broad, flat handlebar offering no less leverage than a pitchfork, and with nicely bolstered midrange power, you can stick it in a gear (any gear, really) and just steer. Or you can work the slick gearbox and keep the engine on the boil and really make hay. Our ride is short, very short (we can't risk being late to our RSV4 sessions at Misano) but a highlight is a roadside stop to gaze down at Rossi's private flat track in his hometown of Tavullia. (His facility, framed by gently rolling hills, is far nicer than any flat track I've ever seen. Chalk it up to his annual income of over \$20 million.)

Before we get back on the road, other hacks complain of the slippery, polished pavement. (I hadn't noticed — coming from Ontario has its advantages, methinks.) It's been awhile since I've ridden a Tuono but the latest variant has a more supple suspension than I remember the old version having, which lends a degree of confidence with not-up-to-southern-California spec roads.

You're never going to confuse the Tuono with a touring bike, and yet with its diminutive fairing — that creates a calm pocket of air — it's a more usable machine than its reputation would suggest. If you're a wheelie hoodlum you can fulfill your desires, but with a set of soft bags the Tuono would make a surprisingly useful daily knockabout. And then there's the sound the thing makes, which is more than enough to relegate any shortcoming to nothing more significant than a mosquito bite. 

I circled about the Tuono with a vague feeling of unease. Something was different, though I couldn't articulate exactly *what* was different. And then I spotted the old Tuono, brought by Aprilia to function as guide's bike for our short spin into the Italian countryside. *It's no longer hideous* I blurted to a colleague standing next to me. What? "Oh, the nose," he said. "You're right."

The old Tuono was a functionally brilliant bike let down only by a peculiar mosquito-at-mega-magnification visage.

Base Tuono (opening spread) is \$14,995. Tuono Factory in Supersport graphics (this page) is \$16,795.



to be or not to **#be a racer**



RSV4 R & FACTORY

\$1,000 in Customer Cash*

Two Wheel Motorsport
5624 Hwy 6 North
Guelph, ON
1 888 469-1128 ext. #3
www.twowheelmotorsport.ca

Wheelsport
1390 Youville Drive
Ottawa, ON
Tel.: 613 841-9400
www.wheelsport.ca



aprilia

©Piaggio Group Americas 2014. Aprilia® is a worldwide registered trademark of Piaggio & C. S.p.A.

Obey local traffic safety laws and always wear a helmet, appropriate eyewear and proper apparel.

*\$1000 Customer cash available on all 2015 RSV4R and factory Models. Program runs from June 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015.

SPYDER

Two Wheel Motorsport

5624 Hwy 6 North
Guelph, ON
1 888 469-1128 ext. #3
www.twowheelmotorsport.ca

Bennett Powersports

701 Brock St. North
Whitby-Durham, ON
Tel.: 905 430-6360
866 430-6360
www.bennettpowersports.com



can-am



© 2015 Bombardier Recreational Products Inc. (BRP). All rights reserved. ®, TM and the BRP logo are trademarks of BRP or its affiliates. For more information, please consult your dealer or authorized Can-Am www.can-am.brp.com. Some models shown may include optional equipment. Drive responsibly. Be sure to comply with any applicable local laws. Keep in mind that alcohol, drugs and driving do not mix.

WHAT'S YOUR SOUND?

\$1000 in Customer Cash on V7 Range*



TWO WHEEL MOTORSPO

5624 HWY 6 NORTH
GUELPH, ON
1 888 469-1128 EXT #3
WWW.TWOWHEELMOTORSPO.T.CA

WHEELSPORT

1390 YOUVILLE DRIVE
OTTAWA, ON
TEL.: 613 841-9400
WWW.WHEELSPORT.CA

©Piaggio Group Americas 2014. Moto Guzzi® is a worldwide registered trademark of Piaggio & C. S.p.A. Obey local traffic safety laws and always wear a helmet, appropriate eyewear and proper apparel. *\$1000 Customer Cash available on 2014 V7 Special Models. Ask your authorized Moto Guzzi Dealer for customer cash available on other V7 models. Program runs from June 1, 2015 to August 31, 2015.

MOTO GUZZI

AMERICA



www.triumph-motorcycles.ca

GP Bikes
1100 Champlain Court
Whitby, ON
1 866 475-7111
www.gpbikes.com



FOR THE RIDE

CYCLE CANADA TEST

KAWASAKI NINJA 650 ABS

Inner *Ninja*

Steadfast 650 gets the job done





KAWASAKI NINJA 650 ABS



Sometimes we do what we want to do. The rest of the time, we do what we have to do—things like running errands and commuting to work. (Or, because our commute involves walking from our bedrooms to our living room offices, *pretending* to commute by riding aimlessly around Toronto in rush hour.) As we muddle through the weekday grind we yearn for the same thing as you: an empty weekend, twisting roads, and an engaging ride.

But while we have the luxury of blasting back roads on an assortment of the latest and greatest performance bikes, many of you make do with only *one* motorcycle, and it must do double—at least—duty. A 50 cc scooter could be a sensible commuter, but will fail to inspire on a Saturday ride. A 600 cc supersport will provide ample diversion on the weekend, but have you writhing in agony while stuck in gridlock. The trick is to find a bike that does both passably well, something steady and reliable for getting from A to B when you have to, yet entertaining enough to go from C to Z when you want that.

The Kawasaki Ninja 650 ABS is such a machine, though it may not seem so at the outset. That it's sensible enough for commuting is clear when you swing a leg over its 805 mm high saddle. The narrow handlebar sweeps up and back, placing the rider in a comfortable, upright position with very little weight on the wrists. Our taller testers (both of them) complain the confines between seat and pegs are a little cramped, though sub six-footers should be more comfortable. The seat is cushy and narrow enough to allow firm footing, and the bike's relatively light weight (211 kg claimed) makes it easy to manoeuvre around the garage or while backing into parking spaces.

A large analogue tach sits atop a clear LCD screen and the controls are as simple as they come. Thumbing the starter brings the 649 cc parallel twin gently to life. It's liquid-cooled, and ticks over so calmly and quietly at a standstill that there's no worrying about it unduly heating during daily commutes—even on the days you'd trade a kidney for the cool comfort of air conditioning. Clutch pull is light, and actuation and engagement are silky. Shifting through the six-speed transmission is solid and results in a reassuring *snap* with each tilt of your toes. Fuelling—flaws in which become glaringly apparent

SEA CHANGE

The Harley-Davidson XR750 has dominated flat track for generations. The reign is coming to an end

Mind the Armco. Bryan Smith (42) has won both mile races this season. Local hero Doug Lawrence (73) snagged eighth at Springfield on his new Kawasaki. Ninja-based engines are larger than stock and frames are custom fabricated.



The engine from the humble, workaday Kawasaki Ninja 650 has nearly halted the unfettered domination of the greatest engine in motorcycle racing history. Since the dawn of the 1970s, Harley-Davidson's XR750 V-twin has dominated the half-miles and miles of the AMA Grand National flat track circuit. (And it's no different in Canada, where XRs also rule.) But how could Harley's pushrod two-valve engine have endured at the top for so long? It's not a simple answer.

Flat track racing is a peculiar mix of marginally braked machines with obsolete tires on slippery tracks. If you ever surfed a snowy Canadian Tire parking lot in your parents' Impala, you've got a rudimentary sense of how a flat track motorcycle lacks traction. The combination of the tractable power delivery of the Harley combined with over 40 years of accumulated tuning knowledge has made it a remarkably resilient race engine. And it's not that others haven't attempted to dethrone the XR.

Just about every imaginable engine from every brand has been thrown at the XR. In the early days it was Yamaha XS-650 based twins and Honda CB750 fours and two-strokes of every stripe, from Kawasaki triples to Yamaha TZ-750 four-cylinder GP bikes. (All housed in purpose-built flat track



Photographs by Brian J. Nelson

frames.) And it didn't stop there. Ducati 916 and 748 superbike engines gave way to air-cooled Ducati engines and KTM twins and Aprilia twins and even a factory-supported Suzuki team that used a precursor of the current V-Strom 1000 twin. If an engine could suck-compress-ignite-and-blow it was tried. And most have failed. Sometimes a brilliant rider (like Kenny Roberts) could overcome underpowered (Yamaha 650s) or overpowered (Yamaha TZ-750s) machines and beat XRs, but this was the exception, not the rule. And in the '80s Honda built a factory racer (the RS750) and won titles, but when Honda retreated the XR resumed its winning ways. And then decades again passed.

Bill Werner — who, as a factory Harley race-team mechanic, tuned Jay Springsteen and Scott Parker to a slew of titles — is credited as the first to introduce the 650 Kawasaki to flat track, with a crashed machine bought on the cheap from eBay. But the bike's real successes have come in the hands of Michigan rider Bryan Smith, who would have won last year's Grand National title but for a freak mechanical incident. (His oil level sight glass cracked and oil dripped onto his exhaust causing his disqualification from a late season race.)

In May Canadian rider Doug Lawrence rode a Kawasaki similar to Smith's at the Springfield Mile. Testing — Lawrence

ripping it up and down a laneway wearing flip-flops — was limited, but he went on to finish a strong eighth in the main event. Lawrence's career has been built on Harleys, but his Springfield Kawasaki (which he will ride in select mile events this season while resorting to his XR for half-mile events) was his first Kawasaki experience since he rode briefly for Werner's team in 2010.

Lawrence confessed that the team struggled at Springfield, and that his knowledge of mapping fuel injection is limited (the Harley, as God intended, is carburetted). The power delivery between the XR and the Kawasaki is dramatically different, too, and though the XR revs to a pushrod-frightening 9,000 rpm, the overhead-cam parallel-twin Kawasaki (it displaces 748 cc in race trim) sails to 11,200 rpm. Lawrence estimated that by main event time the bike was "80 percent there," which makes his eighth all the more impressive. Lawrence, at 30, is entering the meat of his career. Could the Kawasaki carry him to his first Grand National win? "I've had sleepless nights thinking about it," he says. Here's hoping the unassuming Ninja makes it so.

— Neil Graham

KAWASAKI NINJA 650 ABS




in stop-and-go traffic—is flawless. Acceleration is smooth and the powerband feels steady and linear; in city traffic, the Ninja 650 is as tractable as a tractor.

Standard ABS, working in conjunction with dual 300 mm front rotors and two-piston calipers, helps stop you in a hurry when an errant pedestrian, deafened by ear buds, blinded by the brightness of a smartphone screen, strays into the street. A 41 mm fork and single shock, adjustable for spring preload, do a decent job absorbing the chop of Toronto's construction-strewn streets. When used as a city runabout, the Ninja 650 fades into the background because it simply works as it should, which is ideal, as it allows you to focus on the task at hand.

Much as we enjoy city life, we also love to get away. Toronto is akin to the mythical kraken, the downtown core its bone-crushing maw, 400-series highways its seething tentacles engulfing and disgorging traffic like morsels of food. When the weekend comes we escape north to cottage country for respite.

But first we have to get there, which means eating up some miles on the superslab. While the bike's fairing doesn't provide much weather protection, the windscreen is three-position adjustable through a range of 60 mm and we experience no buffeting when cruising between 120 and 130 km/h. You won't get whiplash when rolling on the throttle in top gear, but knock it down one or two notches for abundant passing power—which will also change the engine and exhaust note from charmless hum to pleasant purr.

Where the Ninja 650 really comes into its own is on the smooth, flowing stretch of road between Rosseau and Port Carling. At turn-in the bike is smooth and steady, its handling crisp enough in tighter quarters, and while it lacks the precision of a more focused machine, the suspension holds the road well. Likewise, though the brakes aren't as powerful as those of Ninja purebreds, they're entirely adequate for what this bike is capable of even with the engine on full boil. The Ninja 650 makes it easy for you to get into a fast, flowing groove and banish the humdrum.

While it's a solid overall package, there are some minor flaws. The mirrors are too small and narrow, forcing us to constantly tuck in our elbows to see what's behind. Also, the sidestand tang is awkwardly placed behind the passenger footpeg. The Ninja 650 is simple, smooth, sporty in the curves, and downright civilized in the city—and it's just \$7,999. In an ideal world we'd all have several bikes in the garage, but if you have to have just one, this is one machine worth a look. 



SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL	Kawasaki Ninja 650 ABS
PRICE	\$7,999
ENGINE	Liquid-cooled parallel twin
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	71 hp @ 8,500 rpm
TORQUE (CLAIMED)	47 lb-ft @ 7,000 rpm
DISPLACEMENT	649 cc
BORE AND STROKE	83 x 60 mm
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.8:1
FUEL DELIVERY	Fuel injection
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed
SUSPENSION	41 mm inverted telescopic fork; offset laydown single shock with adjustable spring preload
WHEELBASE	1,410 mm
RAKE/TRAIL	25°/110 mm
BRAKES	Dual front 300 mm discs with two-piston calipers; rear 220 mm disc with single-piston caliper; ABS
TIRES	120/70-17 front; 160/60-17 rear
WET WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	211 kg
SEAT HEIGHT	805 mm
FUEL CAPACITY	16 L
FUEL CONSUMPTION	5.9 L/100 km
FUEL RANGE	271 km

SUBSCRIBE NOW

to Canada's leading
motorcycle magazine



4 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE:

MAIL: COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW

INTERNET: MAG.CYCLECANADAWEB.COM

PHONE: 1 855 965.9494

FAX: 450 965.9009

CYCLE

CANADA

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY / PROVINCE

PHONE

APT #

POSTAL CODE

EMAIL

- ☐ Please email your newsletter to me.
☐ Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to companies that sell goods and services by mail that we believe would interest our readers. But, if you do not wish to receive these offers, please check here.

* Price for Canadian subscriptions only. Taxes included. International add \$20.00 per year. Make all payments to the order of Editions Jean Robert inc.

TPS: 143276384 TVQ: 1023012959 TQ00001

COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

- ☐ \$25.00 / 1 Year (10 Issues)* ☐ \$49.00 / 3 Years (30 Issues)*
+ FREE GIFT

PAYMENT ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ PAYMENT ENCLOSED

CREDIT CARD #

EXPIRY /

SIGNATURE



Go to
getscanlife.com
on your
smartphone and
download the
free app.

Editions
Jean Robert

300, George-VI
Terrebonne, Quebec,
Canada, J6Y 1N9
Tel: 1-855-965-9494

JOHN LOWEN, KINGSTON, ONTARIO



Sliding downhill forced several pounds of sugary snow through my open vents and into the inner lining of my pants where it slowly melted

When I moved to Calgary (I'm originally from Toronto), I discovered that there are only two seasons: winter and mosquitos. The winters are long and the mosquitos are large. Were it not for skiing and chinooks, I'd have cracked years ago.

In late March the ski season was winding down and I'd only been out twice. The forecast for the month's final weekend was for temperatures in the mid-to-high teens; I was torn between a day of spring skiing or throwing the battery into my KTM 990 Adventure and blasting out the cobwebs in the foothills—but how to choose between the two?

Then I remembered the '80s and my Honda XR250. My parents' garage was full of junk, including a futuristic living room chair. My teenaged brain decided it would be a good—no, a *great*—idea to mount the chair on the XR with tie-downs. (The ride was comfortable, but having my feet hovering near the top of the engine made mounting and dismounting difficult.) That experience inspired me to strap my skis to my KTM and ride to Nakiska for some late-season skiing.

A digression: after a decade of upgrading my riding gear at a glacial pace, I was due for a major update. I'd recently picked up new Klim adventure gear for my


birthday as a gift to myself. The experience was like walking into Best Buy intending to buy a 42-inch TV, but for only a bit more you can get a 50-inch, but for only a bit more ... I'd started at the lower level Klim Overland, and then convinced myself that the Latitude line was warranted, and then ended up with Badlands Pro gear. I reasoned that the fancy new Gore-Tex gear would be ideal for both riding *and* skiing—which, really, would *save* me money.

The night before departure I tested options for securing my skis and poles. I reasoned that using a ski bag would be a good idea to mitigate the risk of carnage on the Trans-Canada Highway. I tried perpendicular to the bike against the rear top box,

but was concerned it would catch the wind or clip a car. So I mounted them with the grain, wedging the rear lip of the skis through the front crash bar and the other end to the outside of the pannier, which left room between the skis and bike for my leg and enough space to touch down at stops.

In the morning I geared up and left my home on the secondary roads south of Calgary and squeezed in a few speed runs to test the integrity of the attachment setup before hitting the main highway. At 130 km/h all seemed safe and secure.

Here's the thing about chinooks: they're warm, but windy. The temperature was 12 degrees, but I was heading into 75 km/h blasts. (The return ride, with the wind, was sublime serenity in chaos, like riding in the eye of a hurricane.)

Within two hours I was standing in the parking lot of Nakiska, changing boots and helmets. Skiing was full spring mode, with dry, granular snow on the hill and sticky spots at the base. My gear was ideal and made me feel heroic on the hill. Vents were open, I had music pumping, and the sun was shining. On the last run (things always seem to happen on the last run) my legs were quivering like jelly and I low-sided on a steep section. The hip, back, elbow, and shoulder protection in the Klim suit meant no bruises. However, there's a chink in the armour; sliding downhill forced several pounds of sugary snow through my open vents and into the inner lining of my pants where it slowly melted. It was a small price to pay for the adventure on my Adventure. 

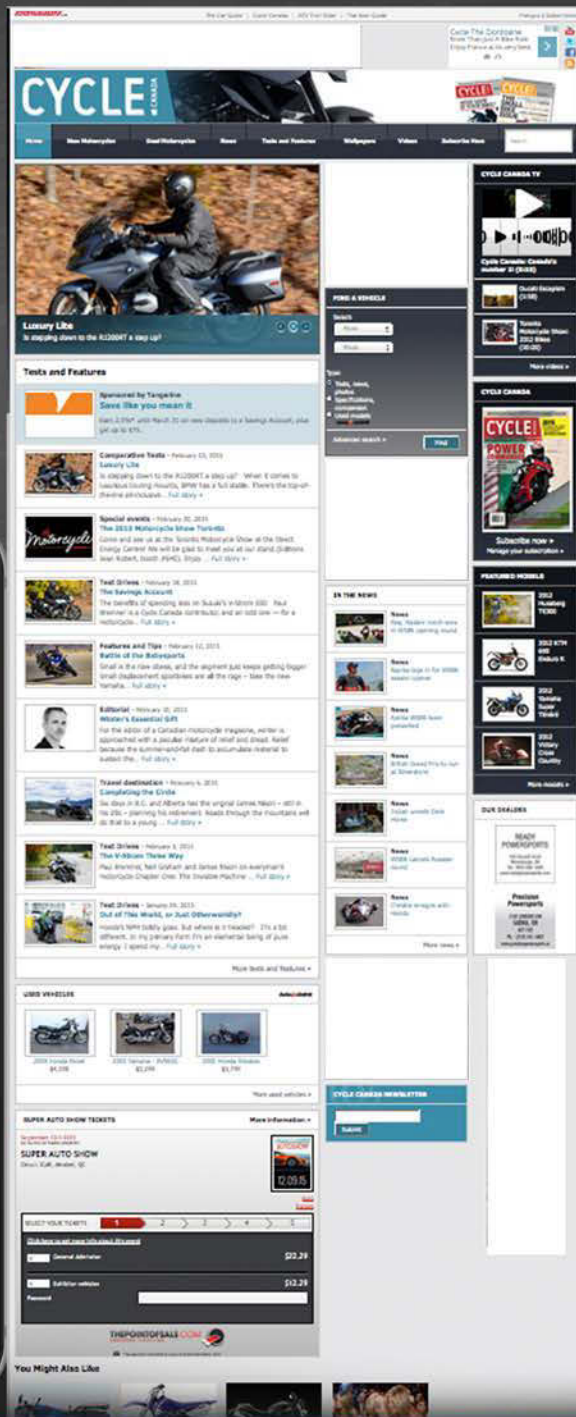
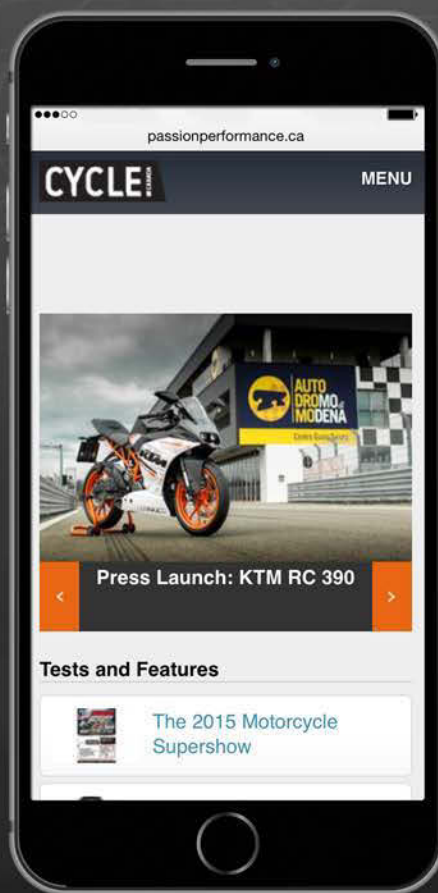
First Person is dedicated to readers of Cycle Canada. Tell us about a motorcycle trip, tale, or experience that you won't soon forget. Contributors will be paid \$100 upon publication. Send 1,000 words and a photograph to cyclecanada@editionsjeanrobert.com.

CYCLE CANADA

IT'S ALSO A WEBSITE!

News
Tests and Features
Comparison tool
Wallpapers
Photos
Videos

Subscribe
Online



WWW.CYCLECANADAWEB.COM

 facebook.com/cyclecanada

 Follow us @cyclecanada

 pinterest.com/cyclecanada

I RIDE
FOR MY SOUL



High mileage and great handling thanks to Dunlop MT Multi-Tread™ technology

Available in a variety of sidewall styles, including black,
narrow-white-sidewall and wide-white-sidewall

Now in 25 sizes to fit most Harley-Davidson models

Roland Sands, custom bike builder: "It's a process; every bike has its own story."

What's your story?

MADE IN THE
U.S.A.
FROM DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MATERIALS



Scan the QR code to play the Roland Sands
interview video, *Inside RSD*.

Share your I RIDE story
@RideDunlop



RSD sponsored by Dunlop. For more Dunlop tire information go
to dunlopmotorcycle.com or call 800-845-8378. ©2015 Dunlop.

AMERICAN  **ELITE™**

Do not overload your tires. Never exceed vehicle load capacity found in your owner's manual. Never exceed maximum load molded on the tire sidewall. Check your tire pressure frequently and always before extended trips. Obey all traffic and safety laws. Dunlop does not endorse or encourage exceeding legal speed limits.

